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THE NEW MUTANTS
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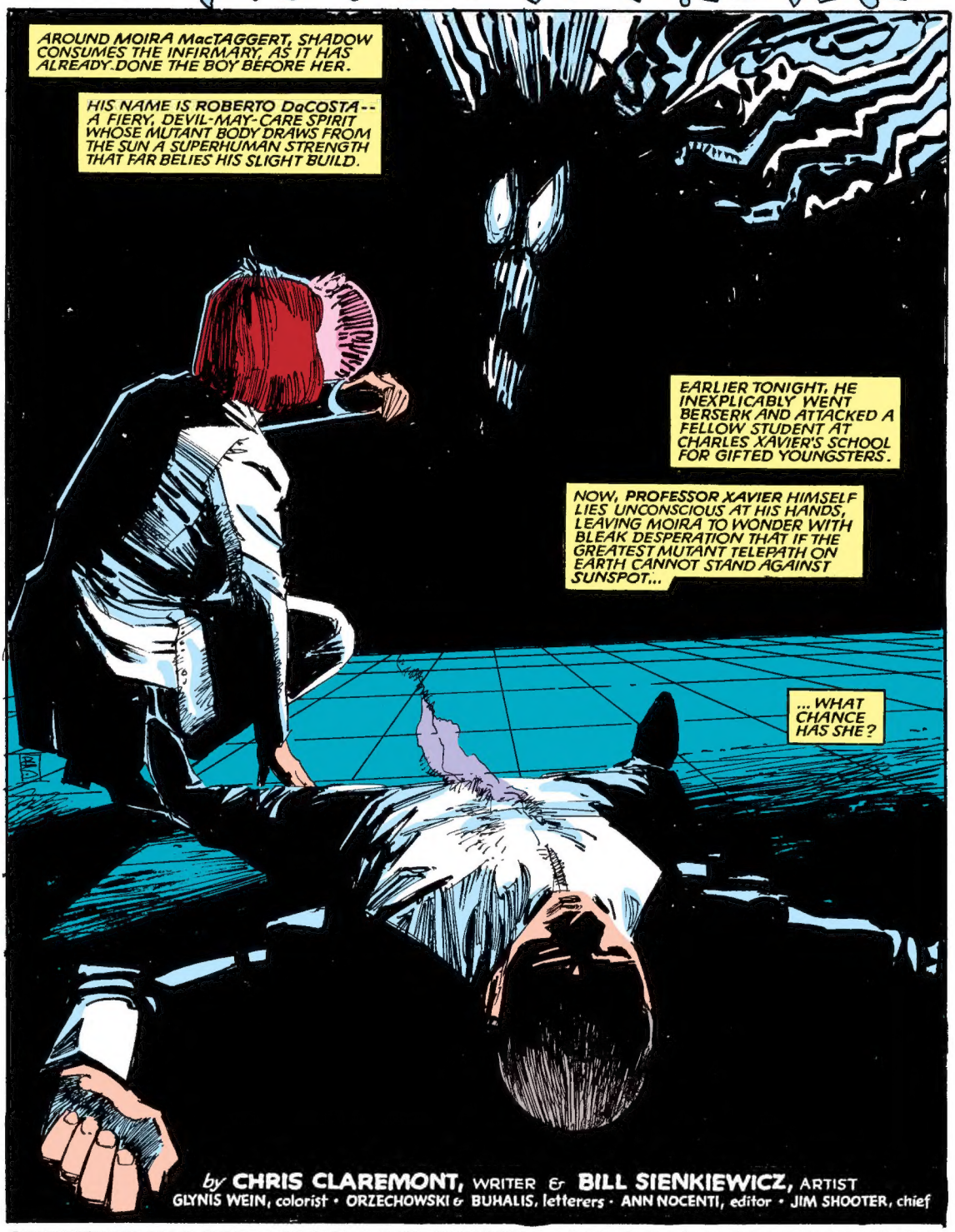
24
FEB

STAN LEE PRESENTS...

The HOLLOW HEART


AROUND MOIRA MacTAGGERT, SHADOW CONSUMES THE INFIRMARY, AS IT HAS ALREADY DONE THE BOY BEFORE HER.
HIS NAME IS ROBERTO DaCOSTA--A FIERY, DEVIL-MAY-CARE SPIRIT WHOSE MUTANT BODY DRAWS FROM THE SUN A SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH THAT FAR BELIES HIS SLIGHT BUILD.
EARLIER TONIGHT, HE INEXPLICABLY WENT BERSERK AND ATTACKED A FELLOW STUDENT AT CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
NOW, PROFESSOR XAVIER HIMSELF LIES UNCONSCIOUS AT HIS HANDS, LEAVING MOIRA TO WONDER WITH BLEAK DESPERATION THAT IF THE GREATEST MUTANT TELEPATH ON EARTH CANNOT STAND AGAINST SUNSPOT...
... WHAT CHANCE HAS SHE?

by **CHRIS CLAREMONT**, WRITER & **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**, ARTIST
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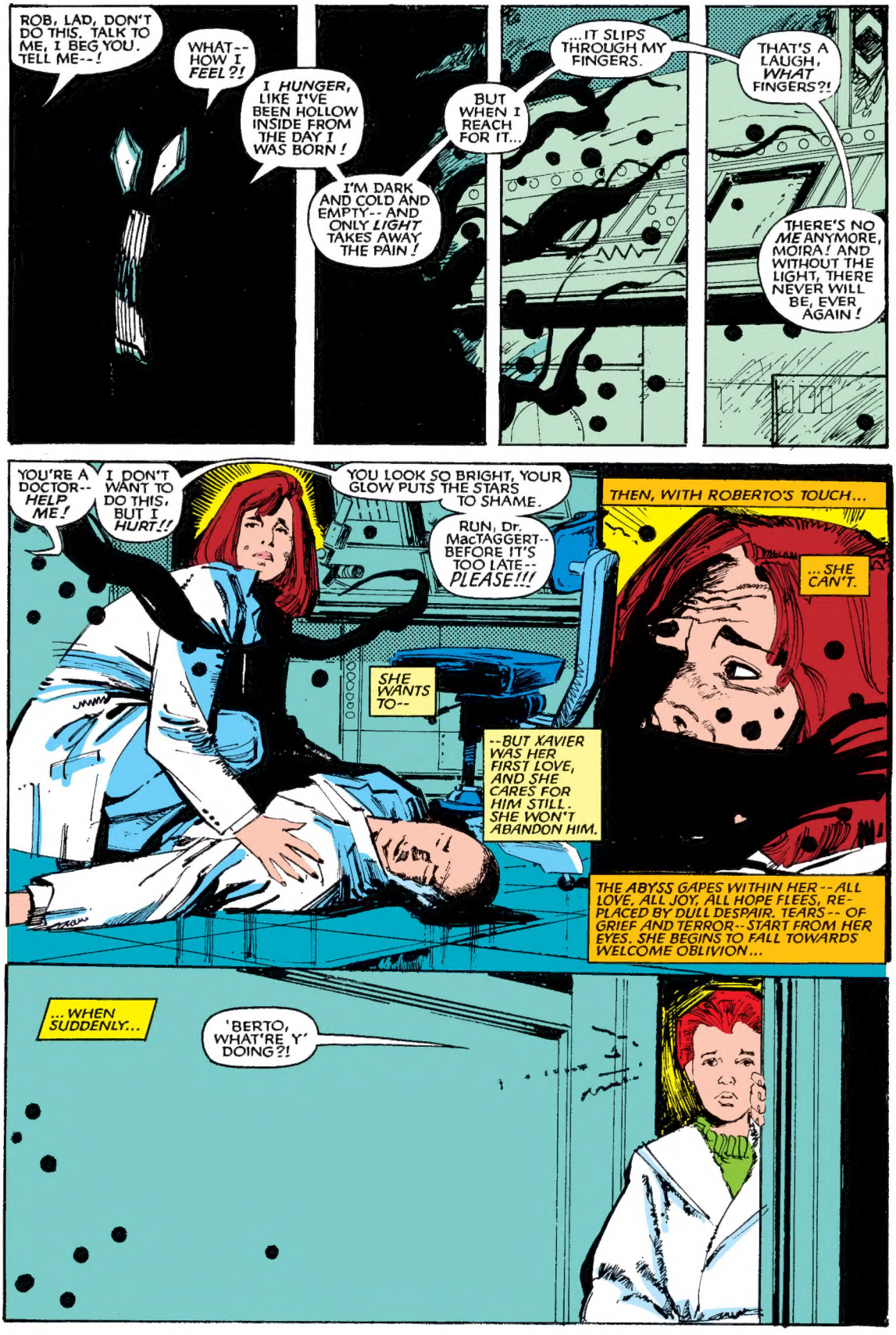
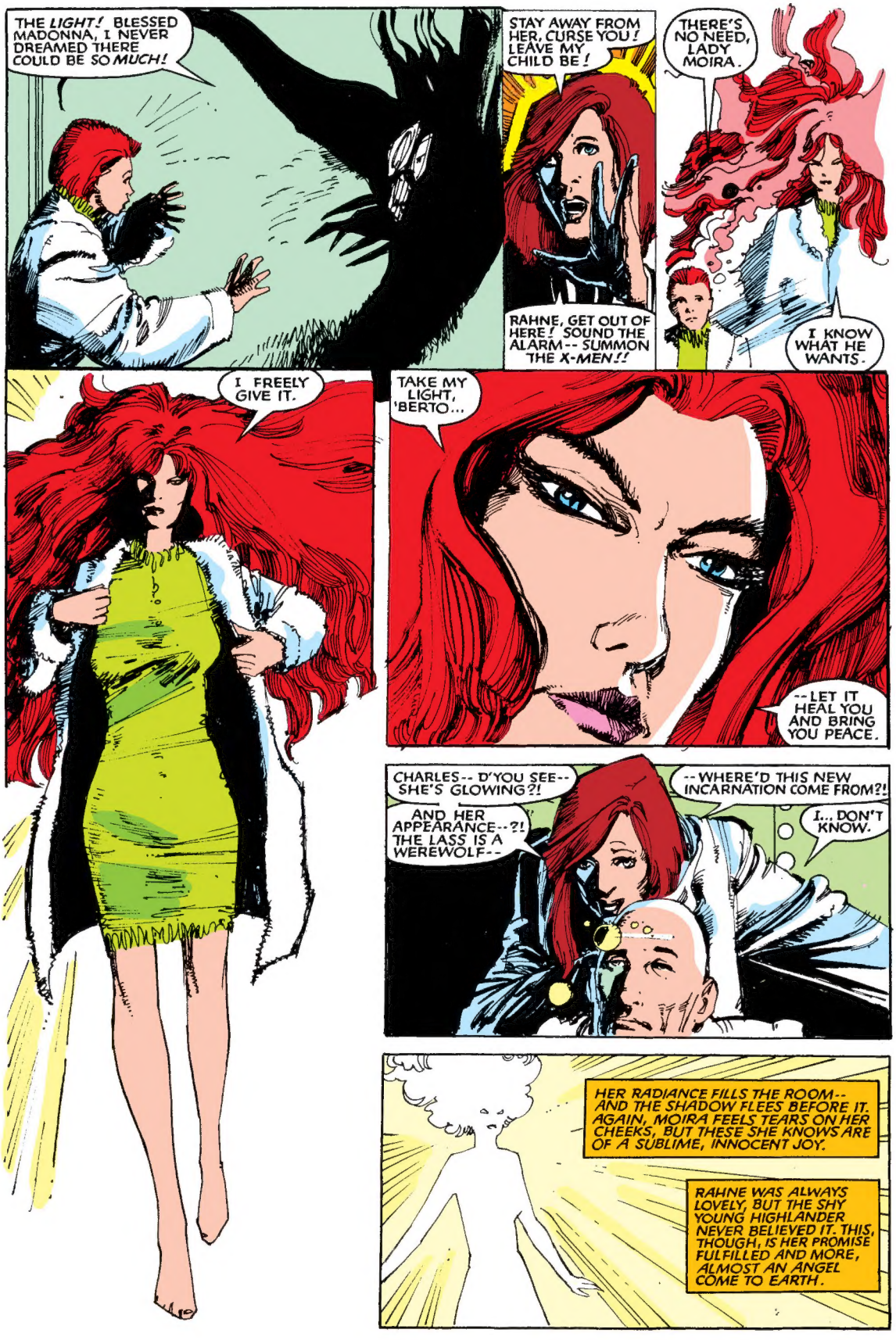
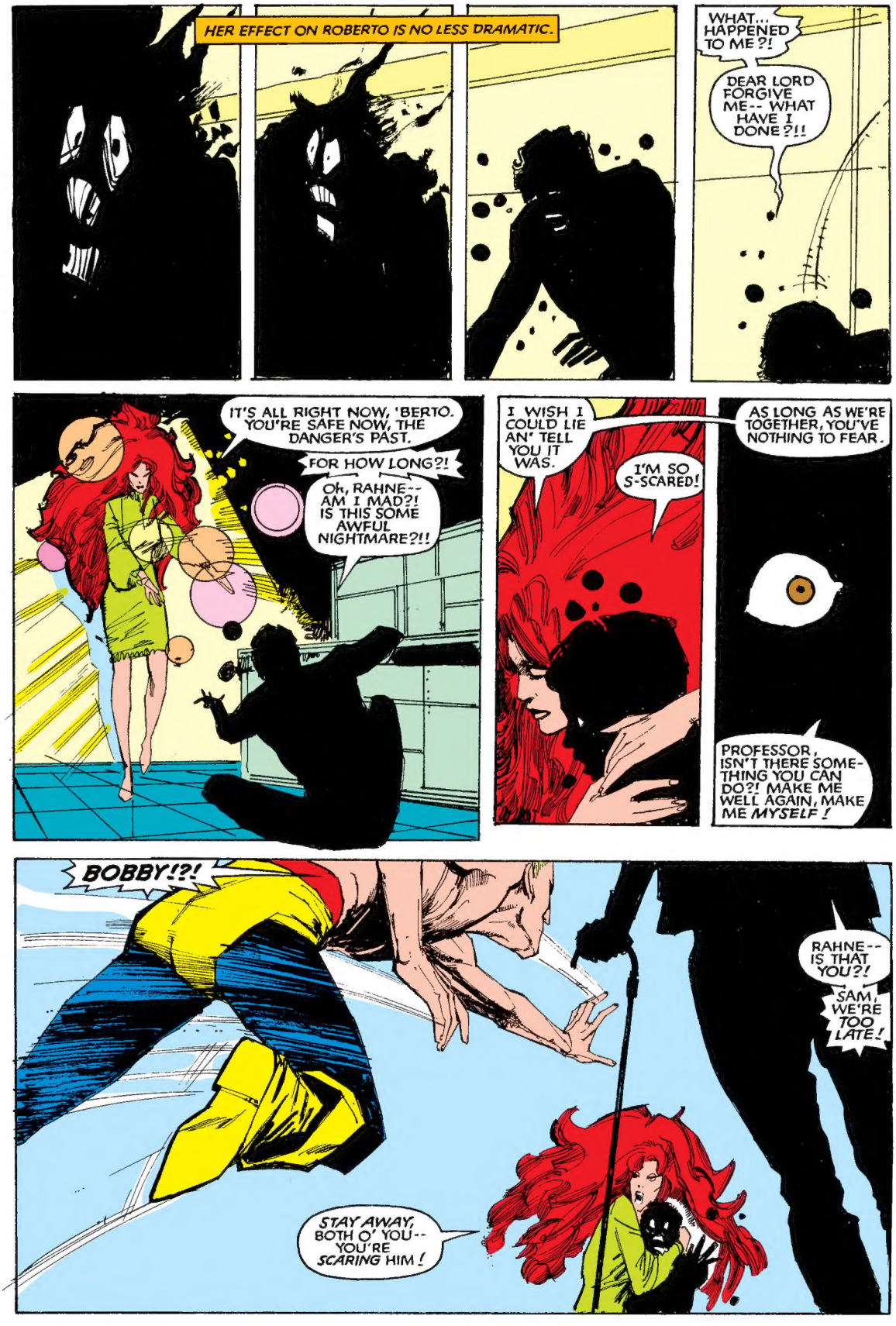
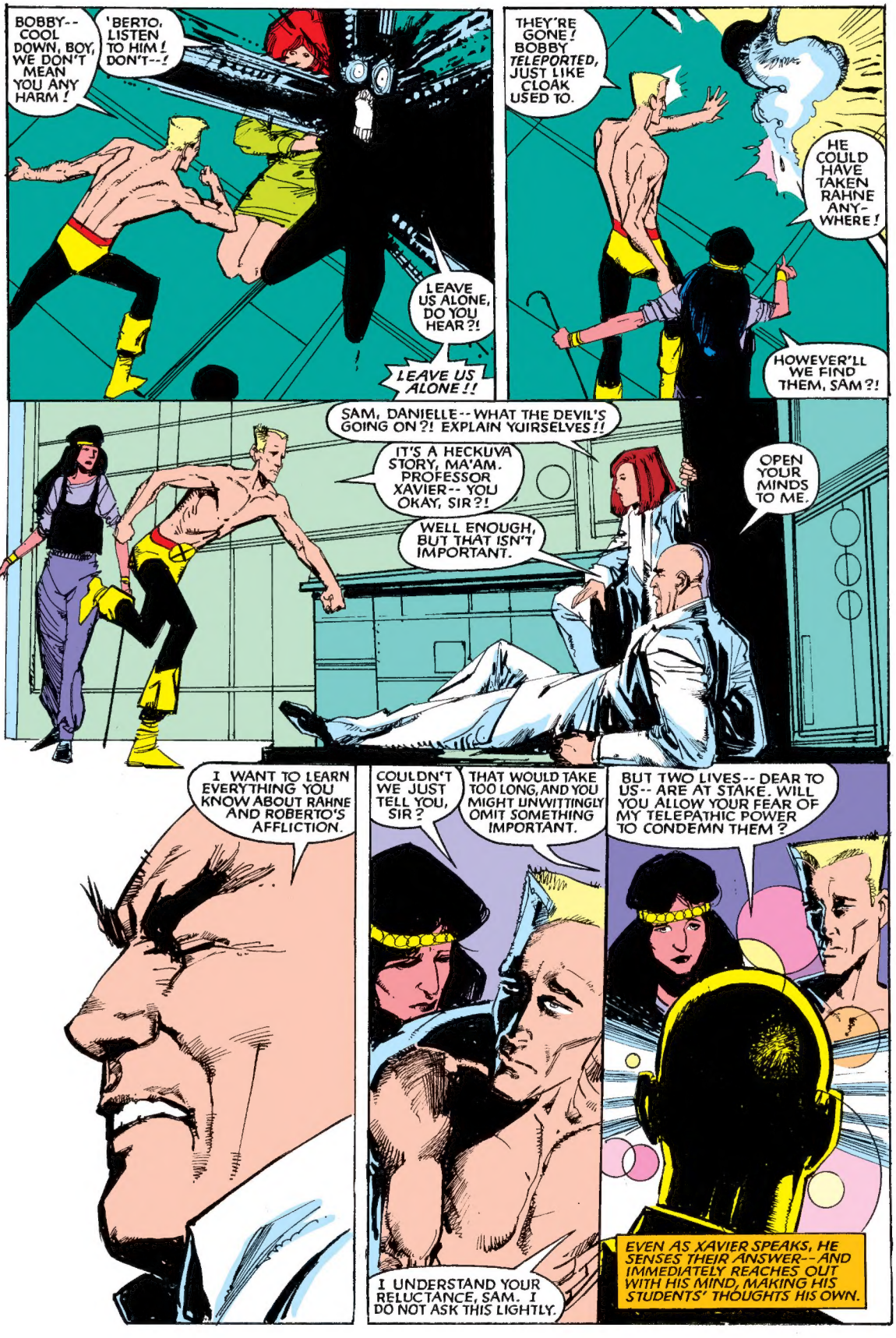
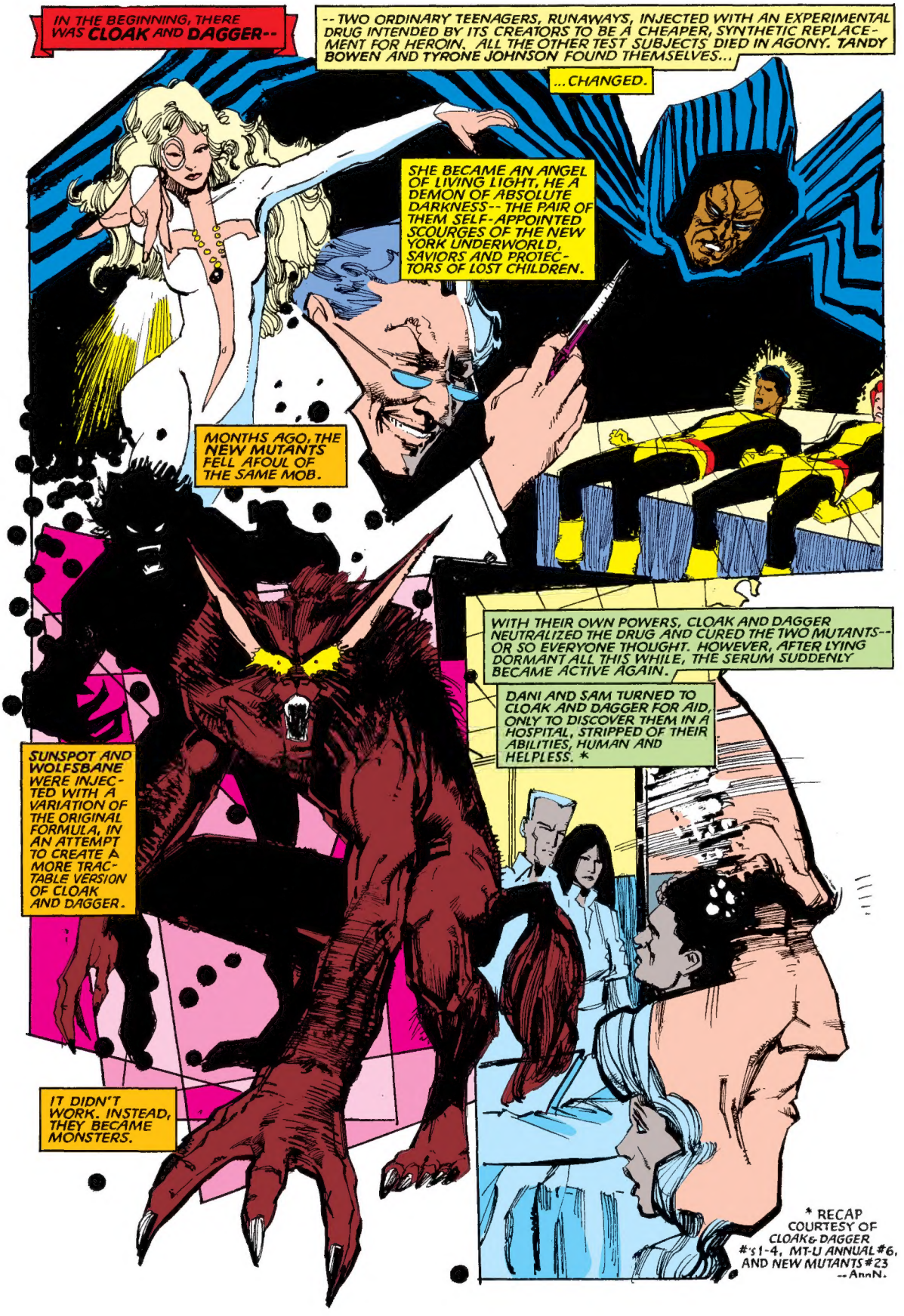

ROB, LAD, DON'T DO THIS. TALK TO ME, I BEG YOU. TELL ME--!
WHAT-- HOW I FEEL?!
I HUNGER, LIKE I'VE BEEN HOLLOW INSIDE FROM THE DAY I WAS BORN!
I'M DARK AND COLD AND EMPTY-- AND ONLY LIGHT TAKES AWAY THE PAIN!
BUT WHEN I REACH FOR IT...
...IT SLIPS THROUGH MY FINGERS.
THAT'S A LAUGH, WHAT FINGERS?!
THERE'S NO ME ANYMORE, MOIRA! AND WITHOUT THE LIGHT, THERE NEVER WILL BE, EVER AGAIN!
YOU'RE A DOCTOR-- HELP ME!
I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS, BUT I HURT!!
YOU LOOK SO BRIGHT, YOUR GLOW PUTS THE STARS TO SHAME.
RUN, Dr. MacTAGGERT-- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE-- PLEASE!!!
SHE WANTS TO--
--BUT XAVIER WAS HER FIRST LOVE, AND SHE CARES FOR HIM STILL. SHE WON'T ABANDON HIM.
THEN, WITH ROBERTO'S TOUCH...
...SHE CAN'T.
THE ABYSS GAPES WITHIN HER--ALL LOVE, ALL JOY, ALL HOPE FLEES, REPLACED BY DULL DESPAIR. TEARS-- OF GRIEF AND TERROR--START FROM HER EYES. SHE BEGINS TO FALL TOWARDS WELCOME OBLIVION...
...WHEN SUDDENLY...
'BERTO, WHAT'RE Y' DOING?!

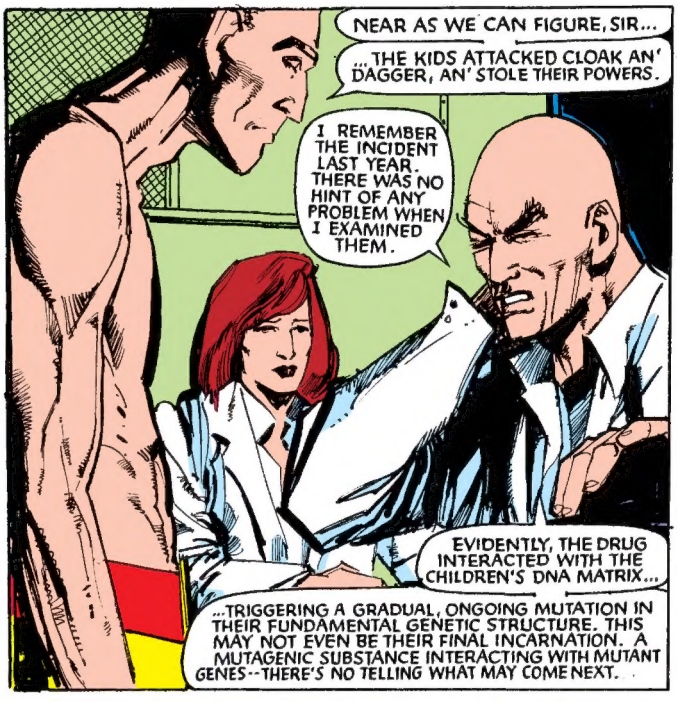

THE LIGHT! BLESSED MADONNA, I NEVER DREAMED THERE COULD BE SO MUCH!
STAY AWAY FROM HER, CURSE YOU! LEAVE MY CHILD BE!
RAHNE, GET OUT OF HERE! SOUND THE ALARM-- SUMMON THE X-MEN!!
THERE'S NO NEED, LADY MOIRA.
I KNOW WHAT HE WANTS.
I FREELY GIVE IT.
TAKE MY LIGHT, 'BERTO...
--LET IT HEAL YOU AND BRING YOU PEACE.
CHARLES-- D'YOU SEE-- SHE'S GLOWING?!
AND HER APPEARANCE--?! THE LASS IS A WEREWOLF--
--WHERE'D THIS NEW INCARNATION COME FROM?!
I... DON'T KNOW.
HER RADIANCE FILLS THE ROOM-- AND THE SHADOW FLEES BEFORE IT. AGAIN, MOIRA FEELS TEARS ON HER CHEEKS, BUT THESE SHE KNOWS ARE OF A SUBLIME, INNOCENT JOY.
RAHNE WAS ALWAYS LOVELY, BUT THE SHY YOUNG HIGHLANDER NEVER BELIEVED IT. THIS, THOUGH, IS HER PROMISE FULFILLED AND MORE, ALMOST AN ANGEL COME TO EARTH.

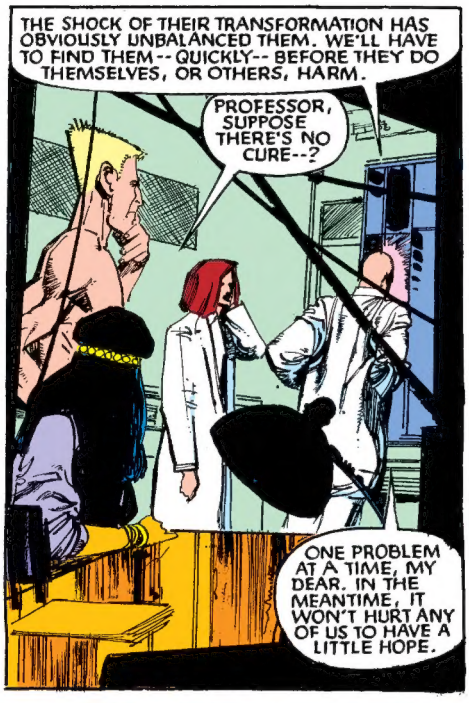

HER EFFECT ON ROBERTO IS NO LESS DRAMATIC.
WHAT... HAPPENED TO ME?!
DEAR LORD FORGIVE ME-- WHAT HAVE I DONE?!!
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW, 'BERTO. YOU'RE SAFE NOW, THE DANGER'S PAST.
FOR HOW LONG?!
Oh, RAHNE-- AM I MAD?! IS THIS SOME AWFUL NIGHTMARE?!!
I WISH I COULD LIE AN' TELL YOU IT WAS.
I'M SO S-SCARED!
AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER, YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR.
PROFESSOR, ISN'T THERE SOMETHING YOU CAN DO?! MAKE ME WELL AGAIN, MAKE ME MYSELF!
BOBBY!?!
RAHNE-- IS THAT YOU?!
SAM, WE'RE TOO LATE!
STAY AWAY, BOTH O' YOU-- YOU'RE SCARING HIM!


BOBBY--COOL DOWN, BOY, WE DON'T MEAN YOU ANY HARM!
'BERTO, LISTEN TO HIM! DON'T--!
LEAVE US ALONE, DO YOU HEAR?!
LEAVE US ALONE!!
THEY'RE GONE! BOBBY TELEPORTED, JUST LIKE CLOAK USED TO.
HE COULD HAVE TAKEN RAHNE ANY-WHERE!
HOWEVER'LL WE FIND THEM, SAM?!
SAM, DANIELLE--WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON?! EXPLAIN YUIRSELVES!!
IT'S A HECKUVA STORY, MA'AM. PROFESSOR XAVIER-- YOU OKAY, SIR?!
WELL ENOUGH, BUT THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT.
OPEN YOUR MINDS TO ME.
I WANT TO LEARN EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT RAHNE AND ROBERTO'S AFFLICTION.
COULDN'T WE JUST TELL YOU, SIR?
THAT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG, AND YOU MIGHT UNWITTINGLY OMIT SOMETHING IMPORTANT.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR RELUCTANCE, SAM. I DO NOT ASK THIS LIGHTLY.
BUT TWO LIVES-- DEAR TO US-- ARE AT STAKE. WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR FEAR OF MY TELEPATHIC POWER TO CONDEMN THEM?
EVEN AS XAVIER SPEAKS, HE SENSES THEIR ANSWER--AND IMMEDIATELY REACHES OUT WITH HIS MIND, MAKING HIS STUDENTS' THOUGHTS HIS OWN.

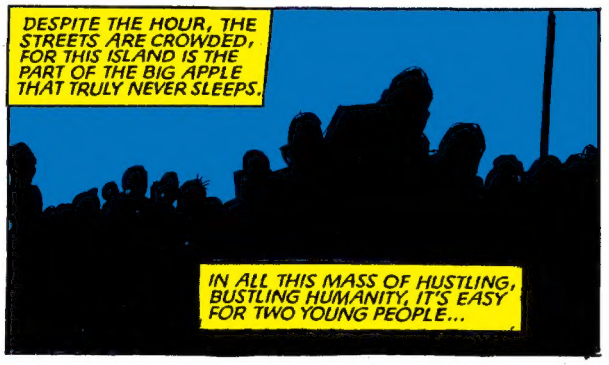

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS CLOAK AND DAGGER--
--TWO ORDINARY TEENAGERS, RUNAWAYS, INJECTED WITH AN EXPERIMENTAL DRUG INTENDED BY ITS CREATORS TO BE A CHEAPER, SYNTHETIC REPLACEMENT FOR HEROIN. ALL THE OTHER TEST SUBJECTS DIED IN AGONY. TANDY BOWEN AND TYRONE JOHNSON FOUND THEMSELVES...
...CHANGED.
SHE BECAME AN ANGEL OF LIVING LIGHT, HE A DEMON OF ABSOLUTE DARKNESS-- THE PAIR OF THEM SELF-APPOINTED SCOURGES OF THE NEW YORK UNDERWORLD, SAVIORS AND PROTECTORS OF LOST CHILDREN.
MONTHS AGO, THE NEW MUTANTS FELL AFOUL OF THE SAME MOB.
WITH THEIR OWN POWERS, CLOAK AND DAGGER NEUTRALIZED THE DRUG AND CURED THE TWO MUTANTS-- OR SO EVERYONE THOUGHT. HOWEVER, AFTER LYING DORMANT ALL THIS WHILE, THE SERUM SUDDENLY BECAME ACTIVE AGAIN.
DANI AND SAM TURNED TO CLOAK AND DAGGER FOR AID, ONLY TO DISCOVER THEM IN A HOSPITAL, STRIPPED OF THEIR ABILITIES, HUMAN AND HELPLESS. *
SUNSPOT AND WOLFSBANE WERE INJECTED WITH A VARIATION OF THE ORIGINAL FORMULA, IN AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE A MORE TRACTABLE VERSION OF CLOAK AND DAGGER.
IT DIDN'T WORK. INSTEAD, THEY BECAME MONSTERS.

* RECAP COURTESY OF CLOAK & DAGGER #'S1-4, MT-U ANNUAL #6, AND NEW MUTANTS #23 --ANN.


NEAR AS WE CAN FIGURE, SIR...
...THE KIDS ATTACKED CLOAK AN' DAGGER, AN' STOLE THEIR POWERS.
I REMEMBER THE INCIDENT LAST YEAR. THERE WAS NO HINT OF ANY PROBLEM WHEN I EXAMINED THEM.
EVIDENTLY, THE DRUG INTERACTED WITH THE CHILDREN'S DNA MATRIX...
...TRIGGERING A GRADUAL, ONGOING MUTATION IN THEIR FUNDAMENTAL GENETIC STRUCTURE. THIS MAY NOT EVEN BE THEIR FINAL INCARNATION. A MUTAGENIC SUBSTANCE INTERACTING WITH MUTANT GENES--THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT MAY COME NEXT.

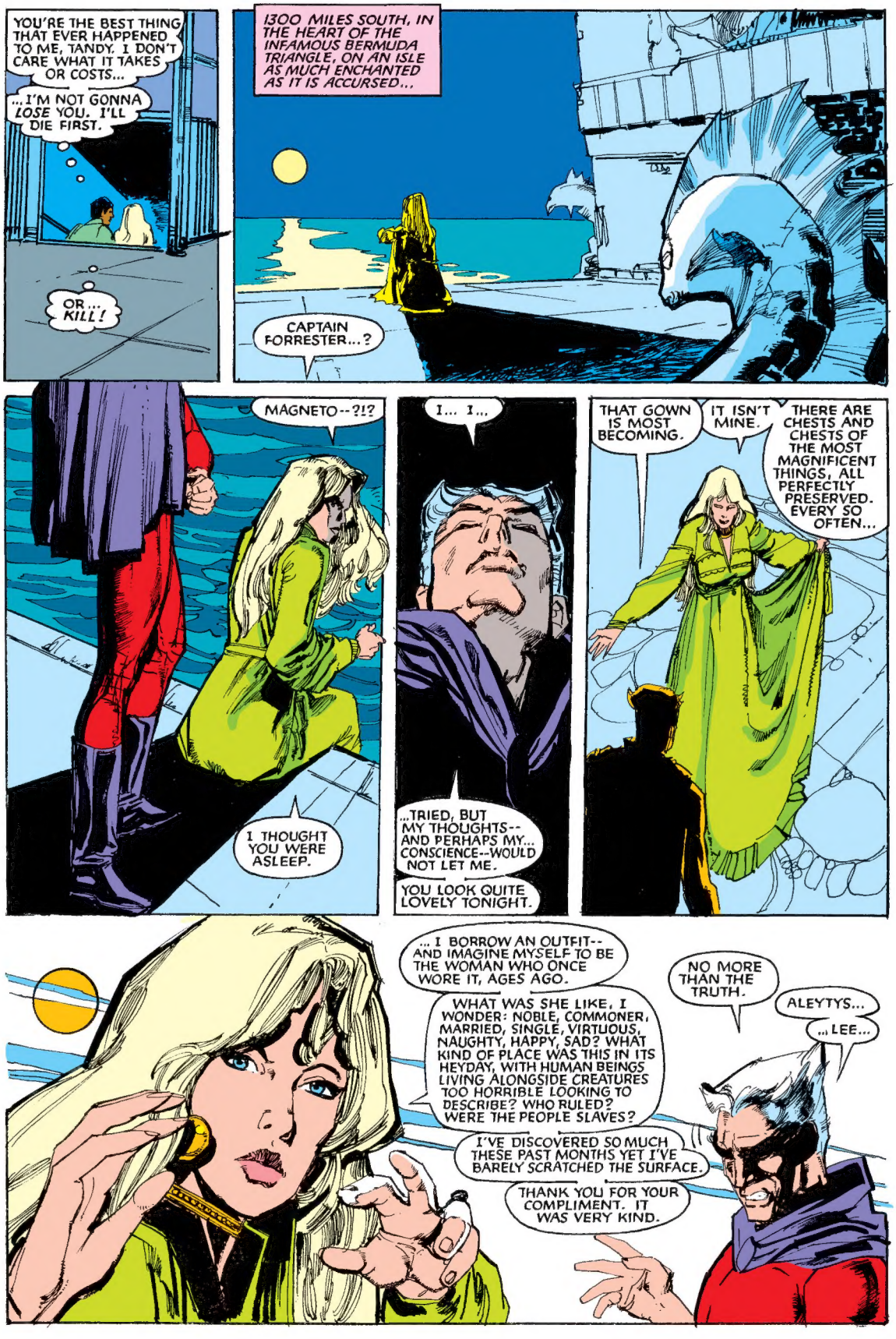

THE SHOCK OF THEIR TRANSFORMATION HAS OBVIOUSLY UNBALANCED THEM. WE'LL HAVE TO FIND THEM -- QUICKLY -- BEFORE THEY DO THEMSELVES, OR OTHERS, HARM.
PROFESSOR, SUPPOSE THERE'S NO CURE--?
ONE PROBLEM AT A TIME, MY DEAR. IN THE MEANTIME, IT WON'T HURT ANY OF US TO HAVE A LITTLE HOPE.

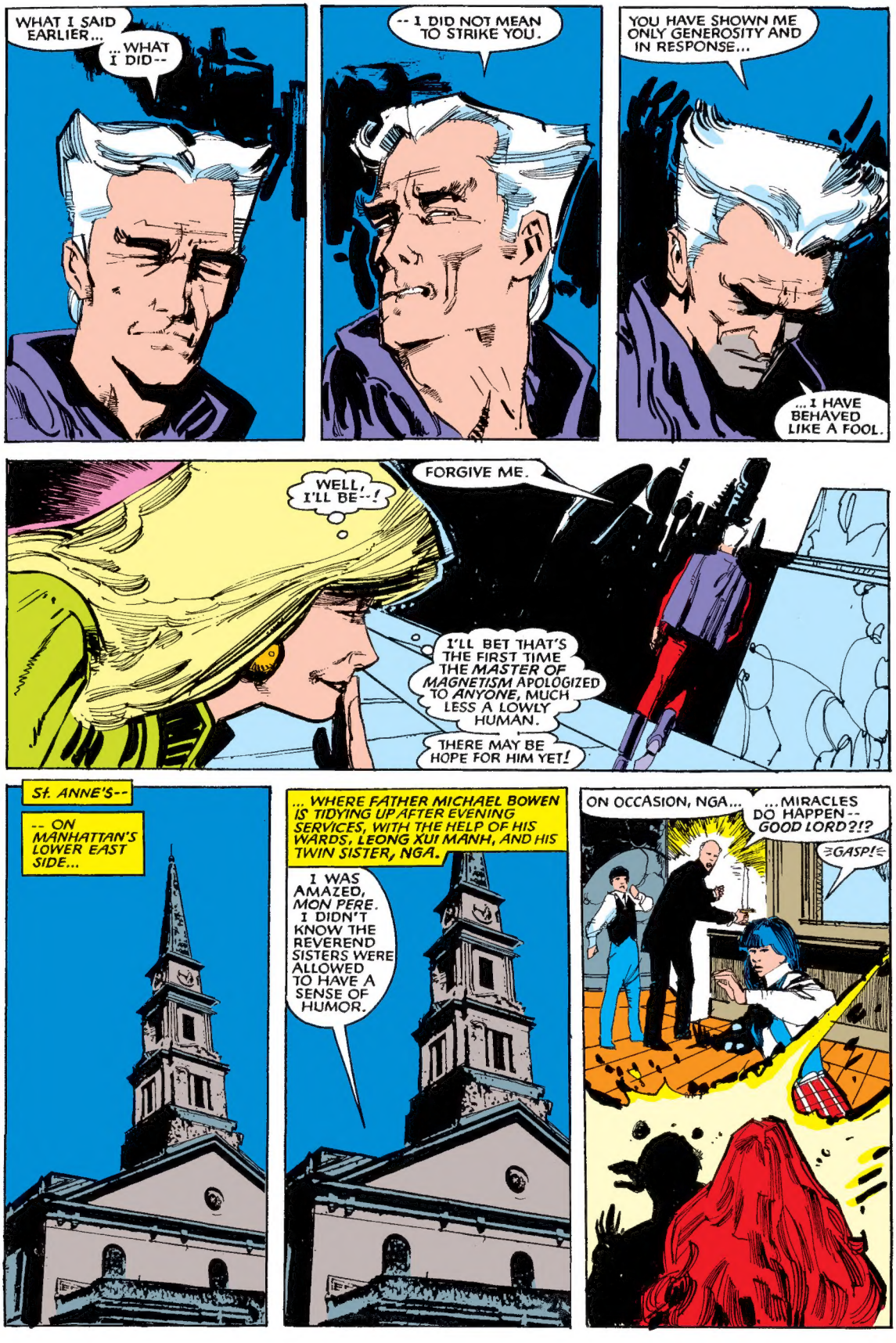
ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL, ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...


DESPITE THE HOUR, THE STREETS ARE CROWDED, FOR THIS ISLAND IS THE PART OF THE BIG APPLE THAT TRULY NEVER SLEEPS.
IN ALL THIS MASS OF HUSTLING, BUSTLING HUMANITY, IT'S EASY FOR TWO YOUNG PEOPLE...

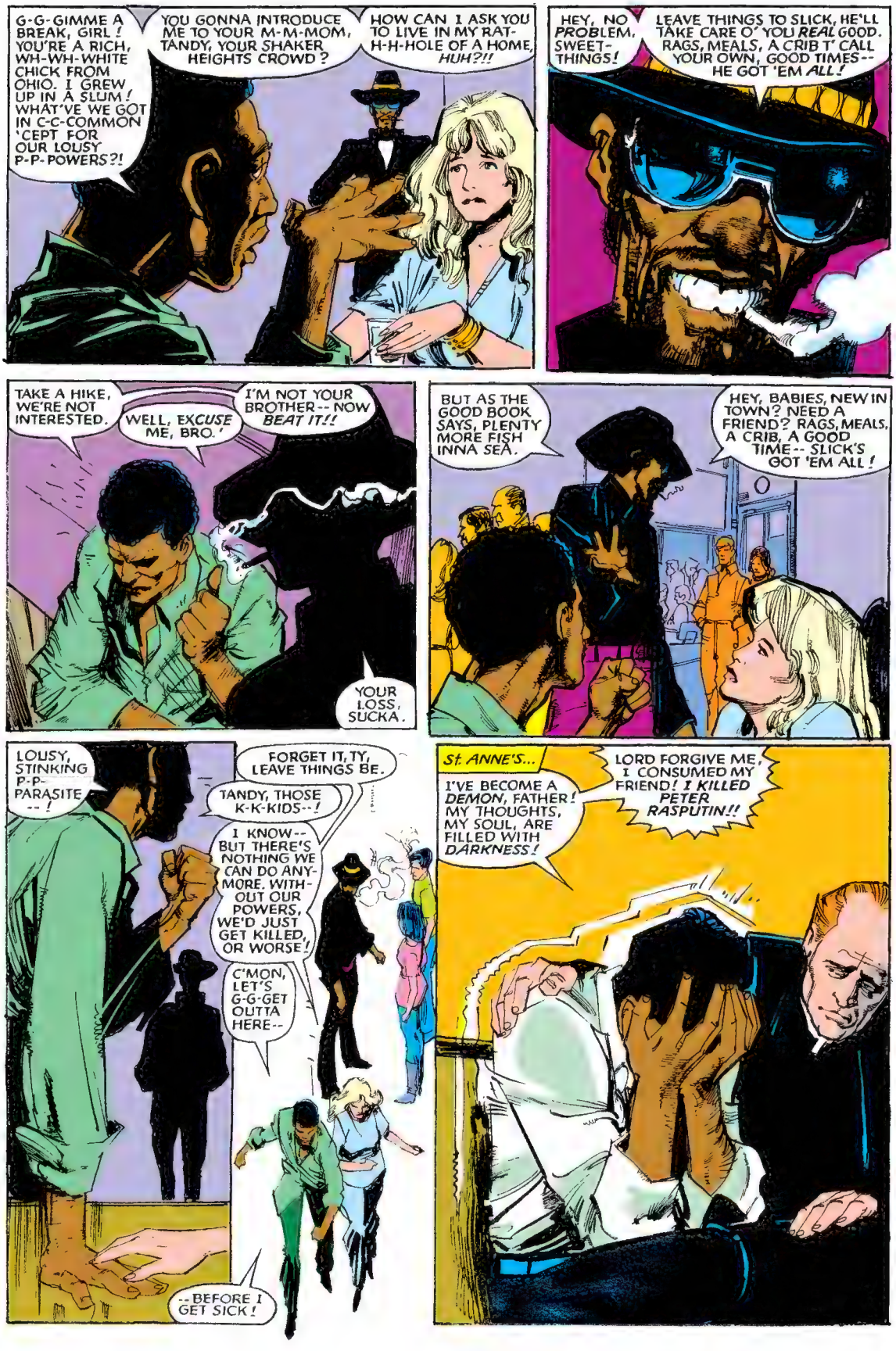
...TO WANDER UNNOTICED.
IT'S SO DARK, TY. I DON'T LIKE IT.
THOSE M-M-MUTIES'D'VE COME BACK, T-T-TANDY. WE HAD TO RUN--WE'VE G-G-GOTTA HIDE, WHILE WE GOT THE CHANCE!
WHY'D WE LEAVE THE HOSPITAL? I FELT SAFE...

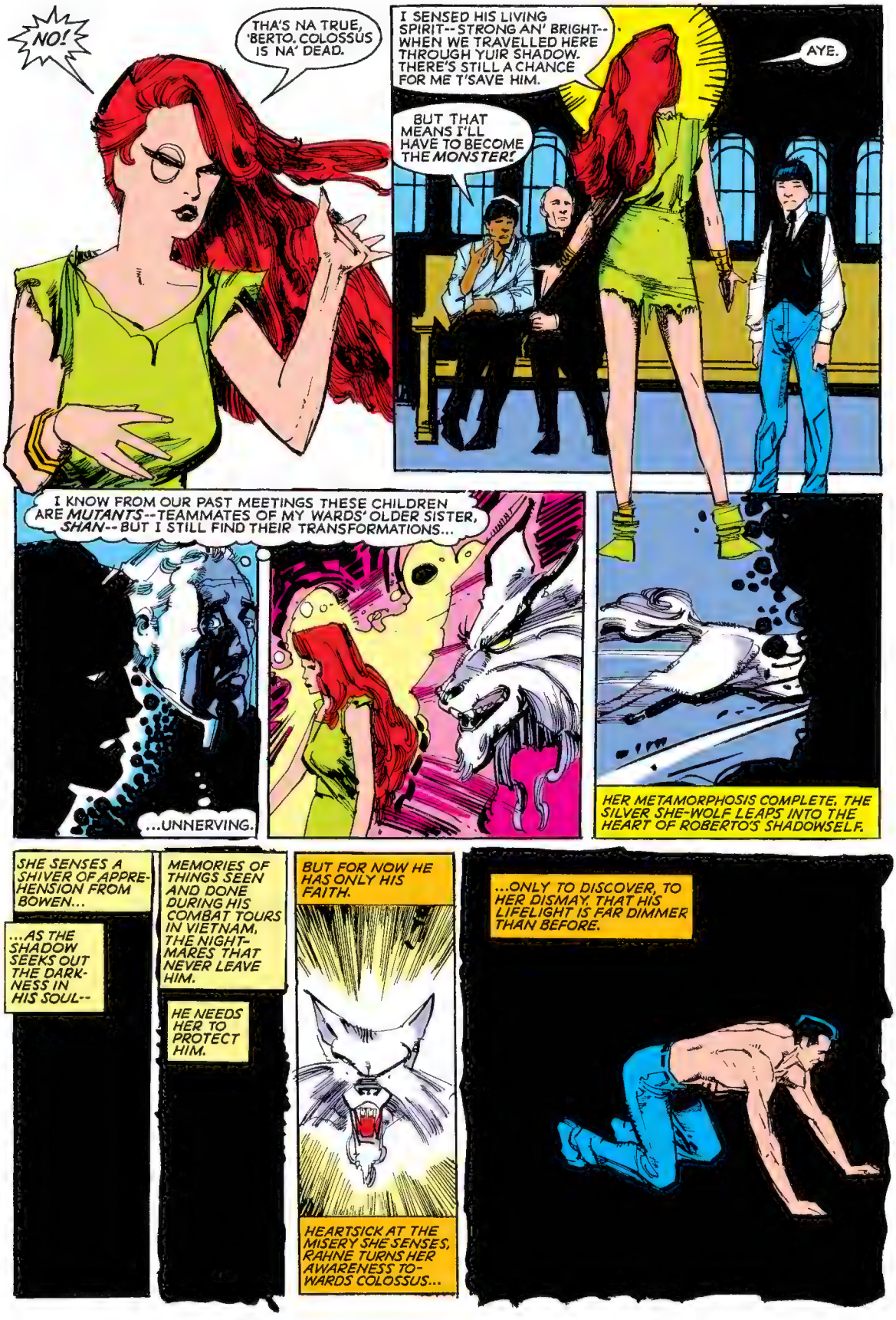
THEY WERE OUR FRIENDS. THEY ASKED OUR HELP, AND WE TURNED THEM AWAY.
AN' YOU CAN B-B-BET THEY WON'T TAKE N-N-NO FOR AN ANSWER.
YOU'LL SEE--THEY'RE NO BETTER THAN THE M-M-MOB.
D-D-DON'T WORRY, THOUGH, I'LL LOOK AFTER YOU. WE'LL FIND A PLACE T-T-TOGETHER AN' I'LL MAKE SURE N-N-NOTHIN' HURTS YOU, EVER AG-G-GAIN!

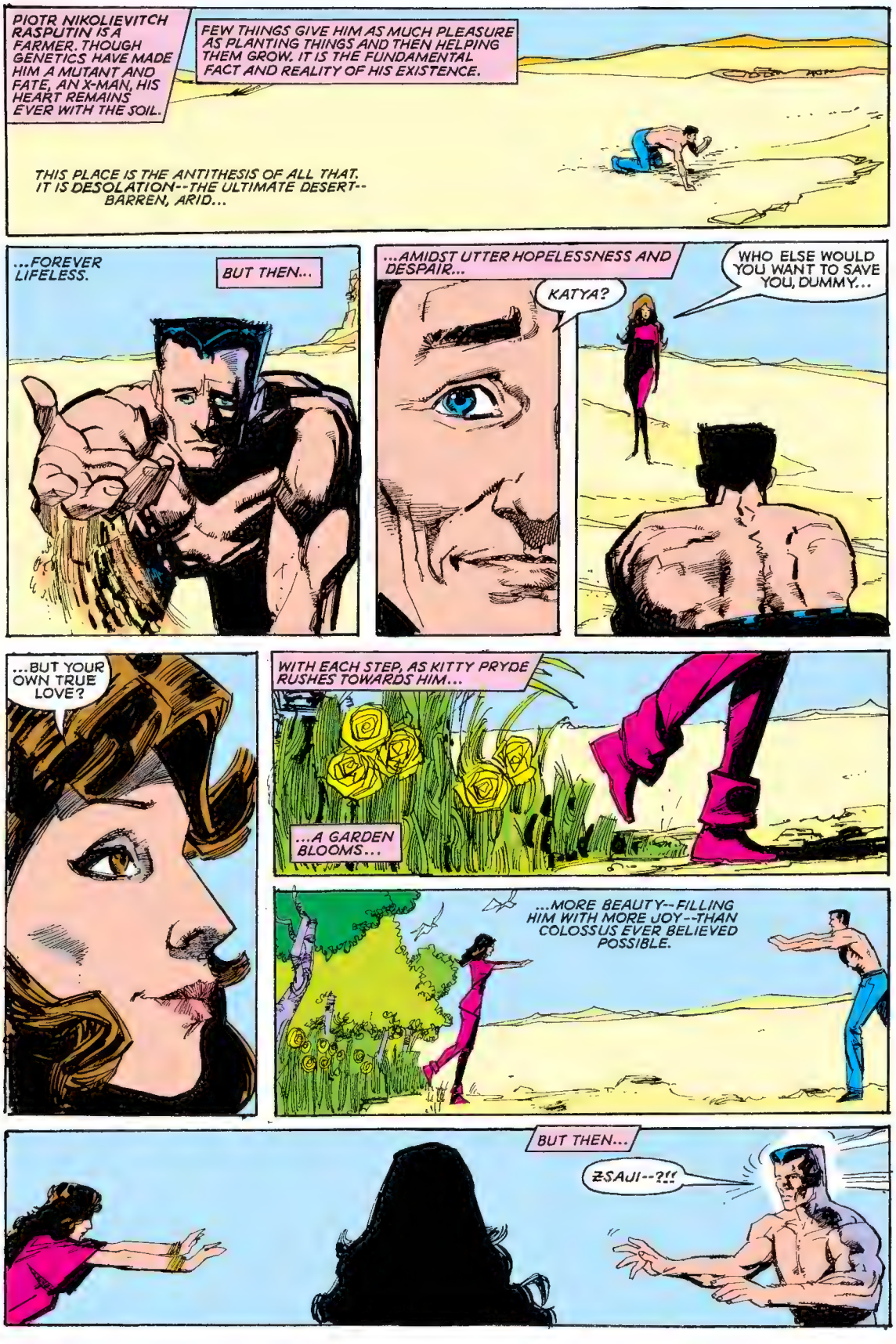

YOU'RE THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME, TANDY. I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES OR COSTS...
...I'M NOT GONNA LOSE YOU. I'LL DIE FIRST.
OR... KILL!
1300 MILES SOUTH, IN THE HEART OF THE INFAMOUS BERMUDA TRIANGLE, ON AN ISLE AS MUCH ENCHANTED AS IT IS ACCURSED...
CAPTAIN FORRESTER...?
MAGNETO--?!?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE ASLEEP.
I... I...
...TRIED, BUT MY THOUGHTS--AND PERHAPS MY... CONSCIENCE--WOULD NOT LET ME.
YOU LOOK QUITE LOVELY TONIGHT.
THAT GOWN IS MOST BECOMING.
IT ISN'T MINE.
THERE ARE CHESTS AND CHESTS OF THE MOST MAGNIFICENT THINGS, ALL PERFECTLY PRESERVED. EVERY SO OFTEN...
...I BORROW AN OUTFIT--AND IMAGINE MYSELF TO BE THE WOMAN WHO ONCE WORE IT, AGES AGO.
WHAT WAS SHE LIKE, I WONDER: NOBLE, COMMONER, MARRIED, SINGLE, VIRTUOUS, NAUGHTY, HAPPY, SAD? WHAT KIND OF PLACE WAS THIS IN ITS HEYDAY, WITH HUMAN BEINGS LIVING ALONGSIDE CREATURES TOO HORRIBLE LOOKING TO DESCRIBE? WHO RULED? WERE THE PEOPLE SLAVES?
I'VE DISCOVERED SO MUCH THESE PAST MONTHS YET I'VE BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMPLIMENT. IT WAS VERY KIND.
NO MORE THAN THE TRUTH.
ALEYTYS...
...LEE...

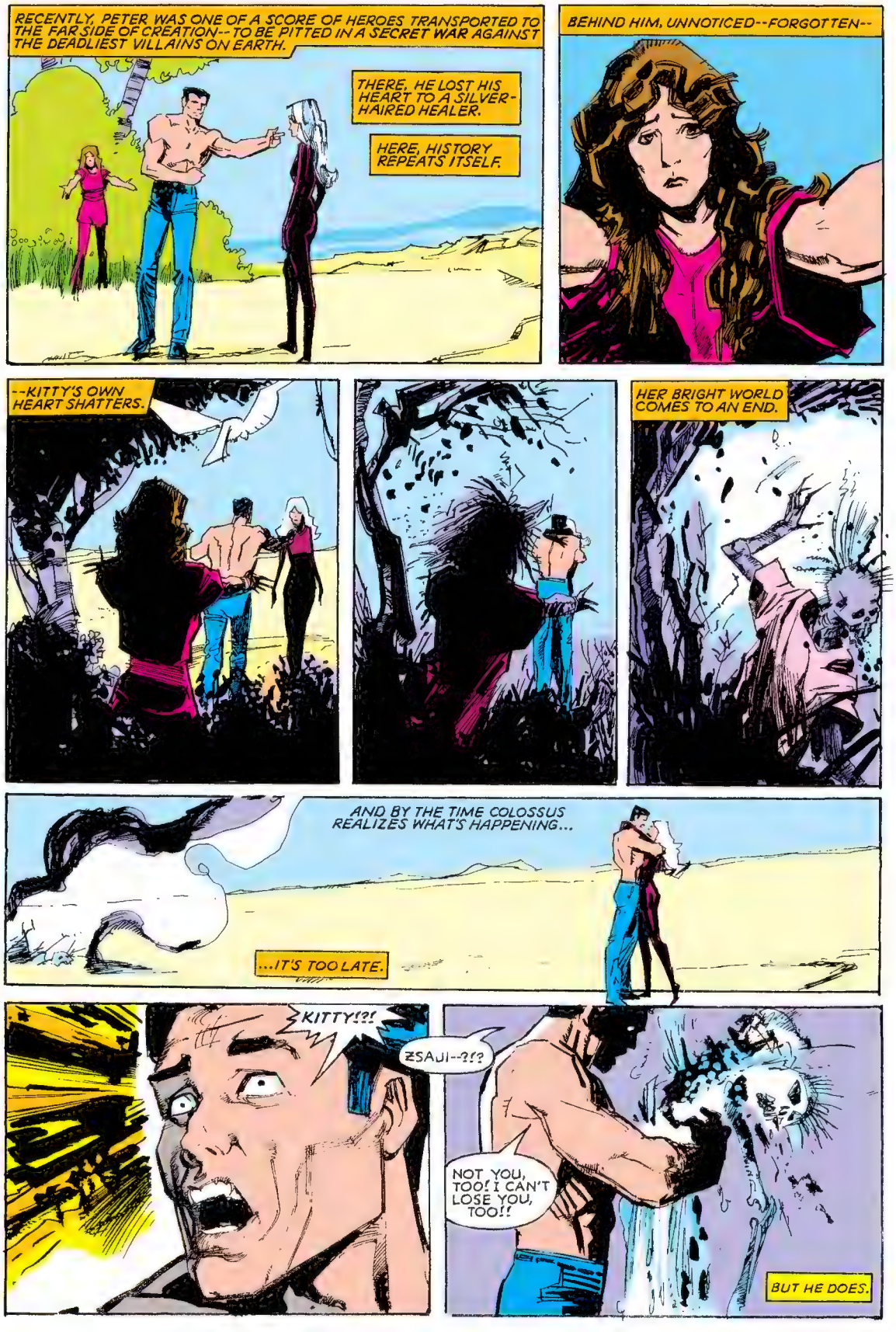

WHAT I SAID EARLIER...
...WHAT I DID--
-- I DID NOT MEAN TO STRIKE YOU.
YOU HAVE SHOWN ME ONLY GENEROSITY AND IN RESPONSE...
...I HAVE BEHAVED LIKE A FOOL.
WELL, I'LL BE--!
FORGIVE ME.
I'LL BET THAT'S THE FIRST TIME THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM APOLOGIZED TO ANYONE, MUCH LESS A LOWLY HUMAN.
THERE MAY BE HOPE FOR HIM YET!
St. ANNE'S--
-- ON MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE...
... WHERE FATHER MICHAEL BOWEN IS TIDYING UP AFTER EVENING SERVICES, WITH THE HELP OF HIS WARDS, LEONG XUI MANH, AND HIS TWIN SISTER, NGA.
I WAS AMAZED, MON PERE. I DIDN'T KNOW THE REVEREND SISTERS WERE ALLOWED TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR.
ON OCCASION, NGA...
...MIRACLES DO HAPPEN-- GOOD LORD?!?
=GASP!=

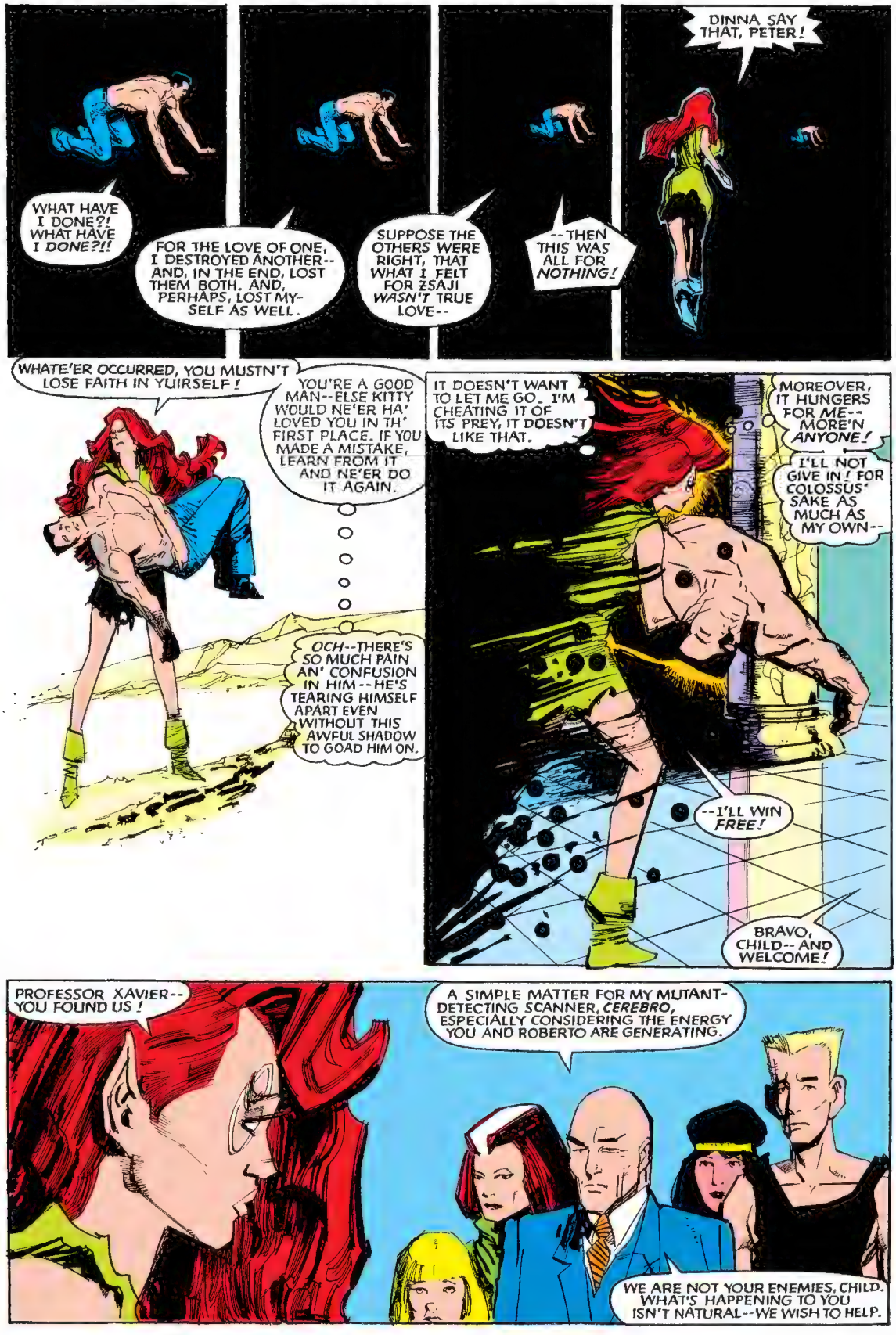
A... CAIRK?! WHY, SEE WHERE YOU'VE BROUGHT US-- IT'S St. ANNE'S, FATHER BOWEN'S CHURCH!
FATHER... BOWEN-- I BEG YOU, IN THE NAME OF MERCY...
...HELP ME!!
< PERE MICHEL, C'EST ROBERTO DaCOSTA! HE LOOKS SO AWFUL, IS HE ILL?! >
I DON'T KNOW, LEONG.
THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH HIM-- HER FACE, HER VOICE, I RECOGNIZE THEM! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. CAN SHE TRULY BE RAHNE SINCLAIR?!!
PLEASE...
... I'VE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO...
... NO-WHERE ELSE TO GO...
NGA, MY FIRST AID KIT-- HURRY!!
THE PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL...
WHY ARE YOU SO UPSET, TY?
THIS IS WHAT WE'VE DREAMED OF-- PRAYED FOR-- RIGHT? TO BE NORMAL AGAIN, FREE TO LIVE OUR LIVES WITHOUT THE BURDEN OF OUR AWFUL CURSE? WE SHOULD BE CHEERING.
I AIN'T INNA M-M-MOOD.
TANDY, YOU G-G-GOT SOMETHIN' TO GO B-B-BACK TO--
-- SHOOT, LISTEN TO ME, WILLYA?! C-C-CAN'T EVEN T-T-TALK STRAIGHT NO MORE.
WE'LL ALWAYS BE FRIENDS, TY.

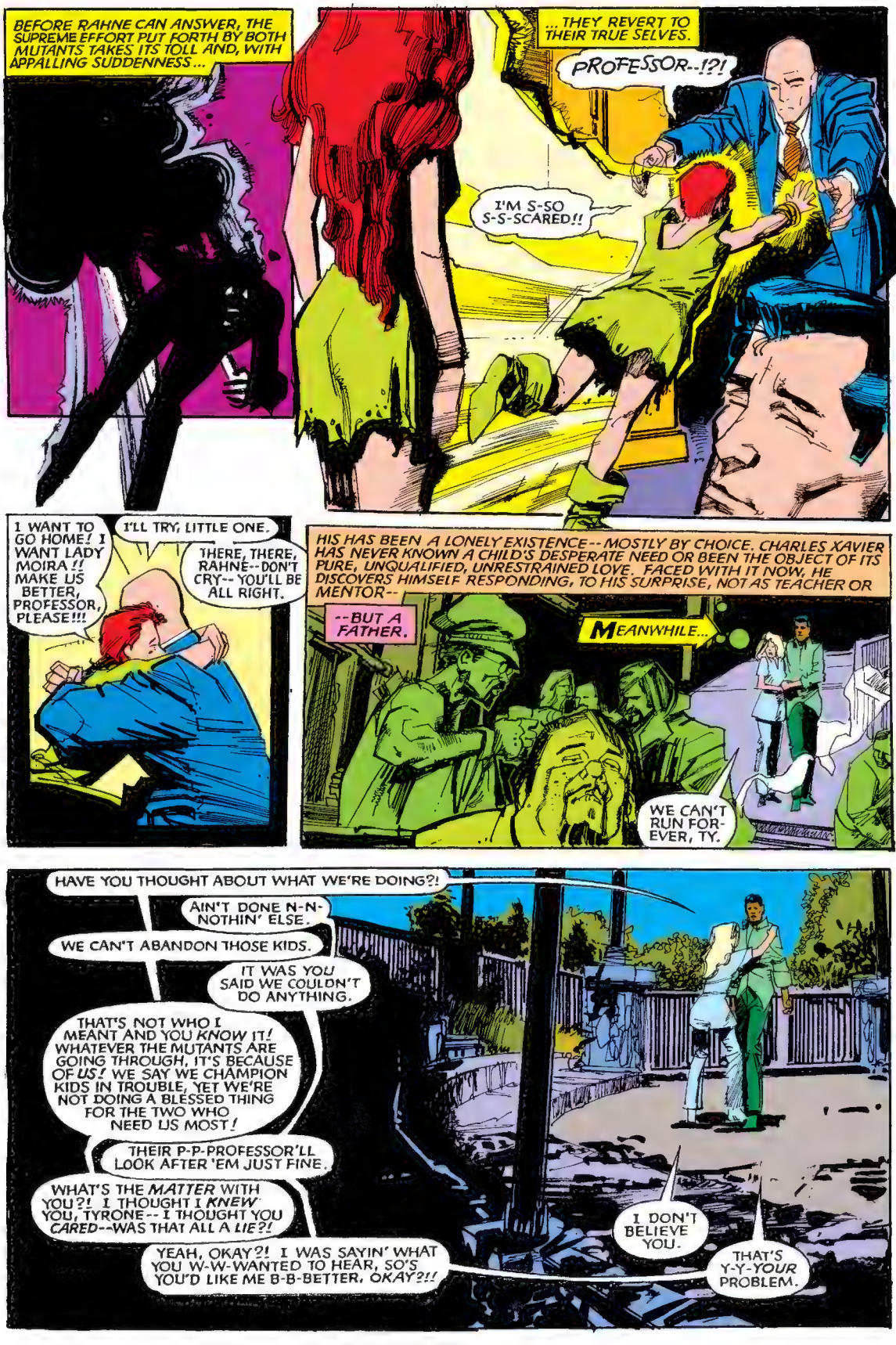

G-G-GIMME A BREAK, GIRL! YOU'RE A RICH, WH-WH-WHITE CHICK FROM OHIO. I GREW UP IN A SLUM! WHAT'VE WE GOT IN C-C-COMMON 'CEPT FOR OUR LOUSY P-P-POWERS?!
YOU GONNA INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR M-M-MOM, TANDY, YOUR SHAKER HEIGHTS CROWD?
HOW CAN I ASK YOU TO LIVE IN MY RAT-H-H-HOLE OF A HOME, HUH?!!
HEY, NO PROBLEM, SWEET-THINGS!
LEAVE THINGS TO SLICK, HE'LL TAKE CARE O' YOU REAL GOOD. RAGS, MEALS, A CRIB T' CALL YOUR OWN, GOOD TIMES-- HE GOT 'EM ALL!
TAKE A HIKE, WE'RE NOT INTERESTED.
WELL, EXCUSE ME, BRO.'
I'M NOT YOUR BROTHER-- NOW BEAT IT!!
YOUR LOSS, SUCKA.
BUT AS THE GOOD BOOK SAYS, PLENTY MORE FISH INNA SEA.
HEY, BABIES, NEW IN TOWN? NEED A FRIEND? RAGS, MEALS, A CRIB, A GOOD TIME-- SLICK'S GOT 'EM ALL!
LOUSY, STINKING P-P-PARASITE--!
FORGET IT, TY, LEAVE THINGS BE.
TANDY, THOSE K-K-KIDS--!
I KNOW-- BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ANY-MORE. WITH-OUT OUR POWERS, WE'D JUST GET KILLED, OR WORSE!
C'MON, LET'S G-G-GET OUTTA HERE--
--BEFORE I GET SICK!
St. ANNE'S...
I'VE BECOME A DEMON, FATHER! MY THOUGHTS, MY SOUL, ARE FILLED WITH DARKNESS!
LORD FORGIVE ME, I CONSUMED MY FRIEND! I KILLED PETER RASPUTIN!!

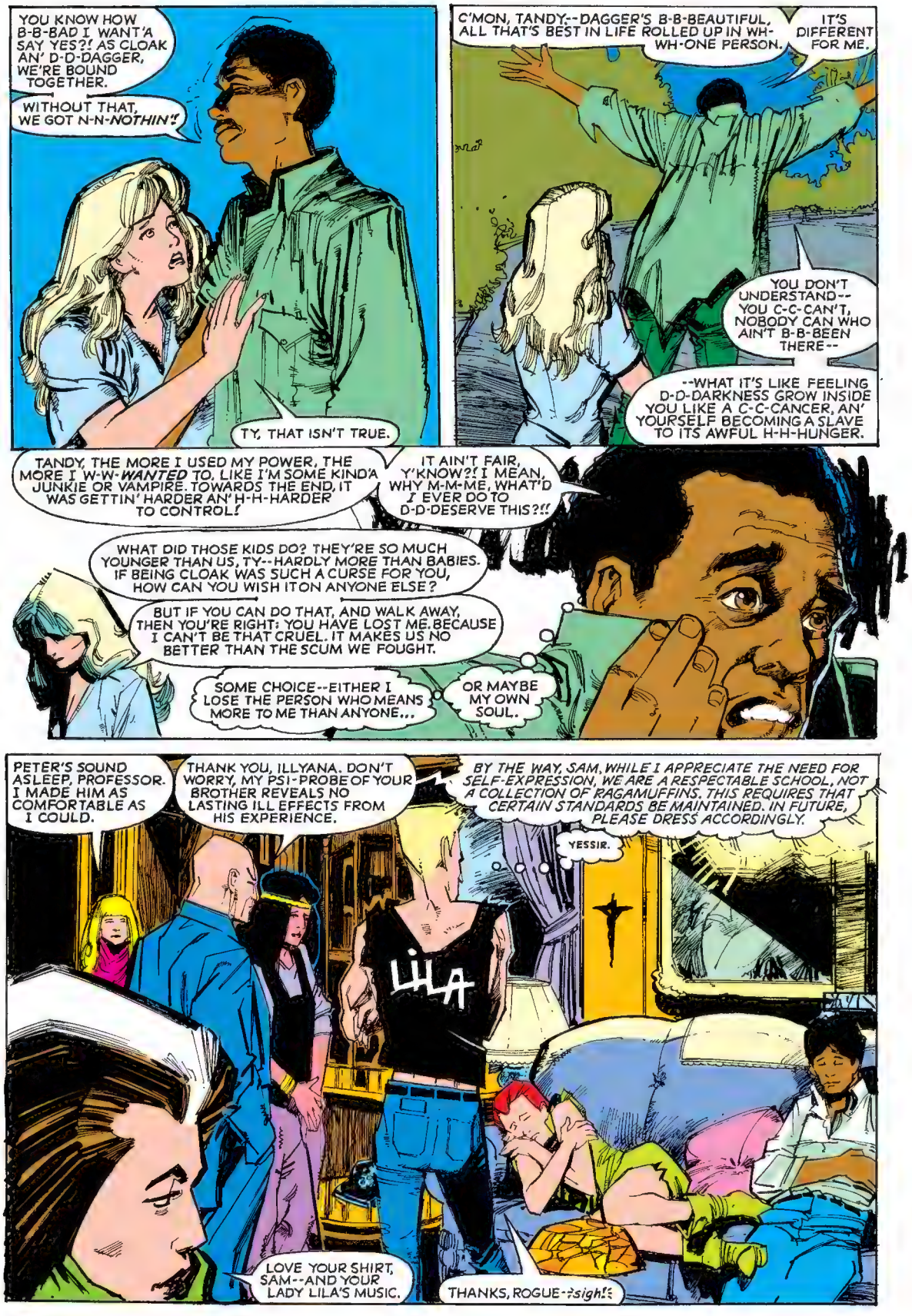

NO!
THA'S NA TRUE, 'BERTO. COLOSSUS IS NA' DEAD.
I SENSED HIS LIVING SPIRIT--STRONG AN' BRIGHT--WHEN WE TRAVELLED HERE THROUGH YUIR SHADOW. THERE'S STILL A CHANCE FOR ME T'SAVE HIM.
AYE.
BUT THAT MEANS I'LL HAVE TO BECOME THE *MONSTER!*
I KNOW FROM OUR PAST MEETINGS THESE CHILDREN ARE *MUTANTS*--TEAMMATES OF MY WARDS' OLDER SISTER, *SHAN*--BUT I STILL FIND THEIR TRANSFORMATIONS...
...UNNERVING.
HER METAMORPHOSIS COMPLETE, THE SILVER SHE-WOLF LEAPS INTO THE HEART OF ROBERTO'S SHADOWSELF.
SHE SENSES A SHIVER OF APPREHENSION FROM BOWEN...
...AS THE SHADOW SEEKS OUT THE DARKNESS IN HIS SOUL--
MEMORIES OF THINGS SEEN AND DONE DURING HIS COMBAT TOURS IN VIETNAM, THE NIGHTMARES THAT NEVER LEAVE HIM.
HE NEEDS HER TO PROTECT HIM.
BUT FOR NOW HE HAS ONLY HIS FAITH.
HEARTSICK AT THE MISERY SHE SENSES, RAHNE TURNS HER AWARENESS TOWARDS COLOSSUS...
...ONLY TO DISCOVER, TO HER DISMAY, THAT HIS LIFELIGHT IS FAR DIMMER THAN BEFORE.

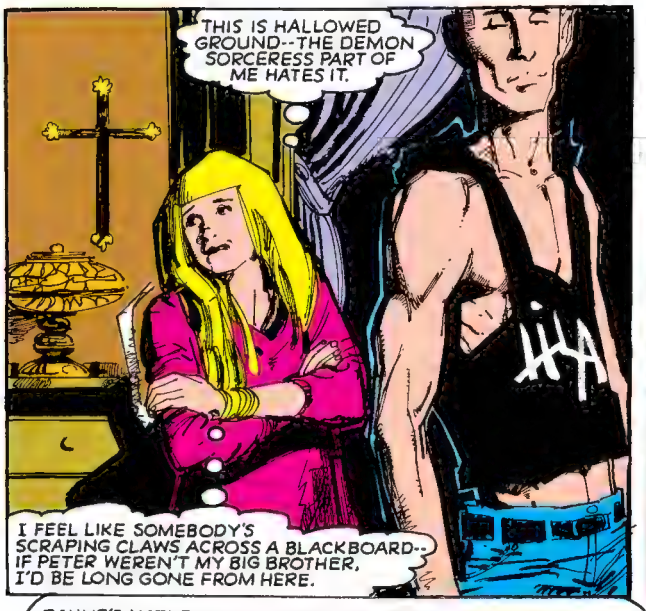

PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH RASPUTIN IS A FARMER. THOUGH GENETICS HAVE MADE HIM A MUTANT AND FATE, AN X-MAN, HIS HEART REMAINS EVER WITH THE SOIL.
FEW THINGS GIVE HIM AS MUCH PLEASURE AS PLANTING THINGS AND THEN HELPING THEM GROW. IT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL FACT AND REALITY OF HIS EXISTENCE.
THIS PLACE IS THE ANTITHESIS OF ALL THAT. IT IS DESOLATION--THE ULTIMATE DESERT--BARREN, ARID...
...FOREVER LIFELESS.
BUT THEN...
...AMIDST UTTER HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR...
KATYA?
WHO ELSE WOULD YOU WANT TO SAVE YOU, DUMMY...
...BUT YOUR OWN TRUE LOVE?
WITH EACH STEP, AS KITTY PRYDE RUSHES TOWARDS HIM...
...A GARDEN BLOOMS...
...MORE BEAUTY--FILLING HIM WITH MORE JOY--THAN COLOSSUS EVER BELIEVED POSSIBLE.
BUT THEN...
ƵSAJI--?!!


RECENTLY, PETER WAS ONE OF A SCORE OF HEROES TRANSPORTED TO THE FAR SIDE OF CREATION--TO BE PITTED IN A SECRET WAR AGAINST THE DEADLIEST VILLAINS ON EARTH.
THERE, HE LOST HIS HEART TO A SILVER-HAIRED HEALER.
HERE, HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.
BEHIND HIM, UNNOTICED--FORGOTTEN--
--KITTY'S OWN HEART SHATTERS.
HER BRIGHT WORLD COMES TO AN END.
AND BY THE TIME COLOSSUS REALIZES WHAT'S HAPPENING...
...IT'S TOO LATE.
KITTY!?!
ZSAJI--?!?
NOT YOU, TOO! I CAN'T LOSE YOU, TOO!!
BUT HE DOES.

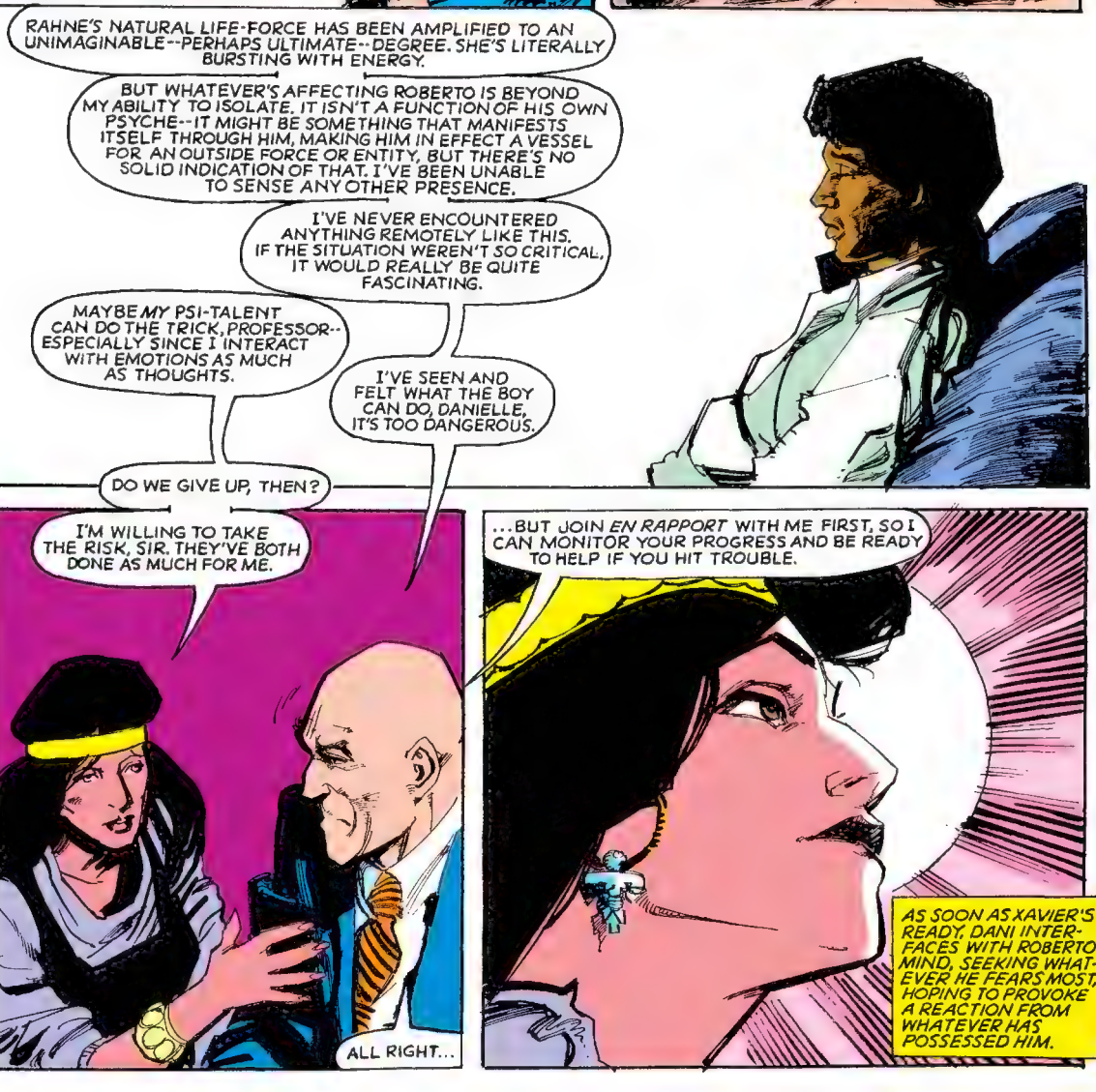

WHAT HAVE I DONE?! WHAT HAVE I DONE?!!
FOR THE LOVE OF ONE, I DESTROYED ANOTHER-- AND, IN THE END, LOST THEM BOTH. AND, PERHAPS, LOST MYSELF AS WELL.
SUPPOSE THE OTHERS WERE RIGHT, THAT WHAT I FELT FOR ZSAJI WASN'T TRUE LOVE--
--THEN THIS WAS ALL FOR NOTHING!
DINNA SAY THAT, PETER!
WHATE'ER OCCURRED, YOU MUSTN'T LOSE FAITH IN YUIRSELF!
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN--ELSE KITTY WOULD NE'ER HA' LOVED YOU IN TH' FIRST PLACE. IF YOU MADE A MISTAKE, LEARN FROM IT AND NE'ER DO IT AGAIN.
OCH--THERE'S SO MUCH PAIN AN' CONFUSION IN HIM--HE'S TEARING HIMSELF APART EVEN WITHOUT THIS AWFUL SHADOW TO GOAD HIM ON.
IT DOESN'T WANT TO LET ME GO. I'M CHEATING IT OF ITS PREY, IT DOESN'T LIKE THAT.
MOREOVER, IT HUNGERS FOR ME-- MORE'N ANYONE!
I'LL NOT GIVE IN! FOR COLOSSUS' SAKE AS MUCH AS MY OWN--
--I'LL WIN FREE!
BRAVO, CHILD-- AND WELCOME!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- YOU FOUND US!
A SIMPLE MATTER FOR MY MUTANT-DETECTING SCANNER, CEREBRO, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE ENERGY YOU AND ROBERTO ARE GENERATING.
WE ARE NOT YOUR ENEMIES, CHILD. WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU ISN'T NATURAL--WE WISH TO HELP.


BEFORE RAHNE CAN ANSWER, THE SUPREME EFFORT PUT FORTH BY BOTH MUTANTS TAKES ITS TOLL AND, WITH APPALLING SUDDENNESS...
...THEY REVERT TO THEIR TRUE SELVES.
PROFESSOR--!?!
I'M S-SO S-S-SCARED!!
I WANT TO GO HOME! I WANT LADY MOIRA!! MAKE US BETTER, PROFESSOR, PLEASE!!!
I'LL TRY, LITTLE ONE.
THERE, THERE, RAHNE--DON'T CRY-- YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
HIS HAS BEEN A LONELY EXISTENCE--MOSTLY BY CHOICE. CHARLES XAVIER HAS NEVER KNOWN A CHILD'S DESPERATE NEED OR BEEN THE OBJECT OF ITS PURE, UNQUALIFIED, UNRESTRAINED LOVE. FACED WITH IT NOW, HE DISCOVERS HIMSELF RESPONDING, TO HIS SURPRISE, NOT AS TEACHER OR MENTOR--
--BUT A FATHER.
MEANWHILE...
WE CAN'T RUN FOR-EVER, TY.
HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT WE'RE DOING?!
AIN'T DONE N-N-NOTHIN' ELSE.
WE CAN'T ABANDON THOSE KIDS.
IT WAS YOU SAID WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
THAT'S NOT WHO I MEANT AND YOU KNOW IT! WHATEVER THE MUTANTS ARE GOING THROUGH, IT'S BECAUSE OF US! WE SAY WE CHAMPION KIDS IN TROUBLE, YET WE'RE NOT DOING A BLESSED THING FOR THE TWO WHO NEED US MOST!
THEIR P-P-PROFESSOR'LL LOOK AFTER 'EM JUST FINE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?! I THOUGHT I KNEW YOU, TYRONE-- I THOUGHT YOU CARED--WAS THAT ALL A LIE?!
YEAH, OKAY?! I WAS SAYIN' WHAT YOU W-W-WANTED TO HEAR, SO'S YOU'D LIKE ME B-B-BETTER, OKAY?!!
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.
THAT'S Y-Y-YOUR PROBLEM.

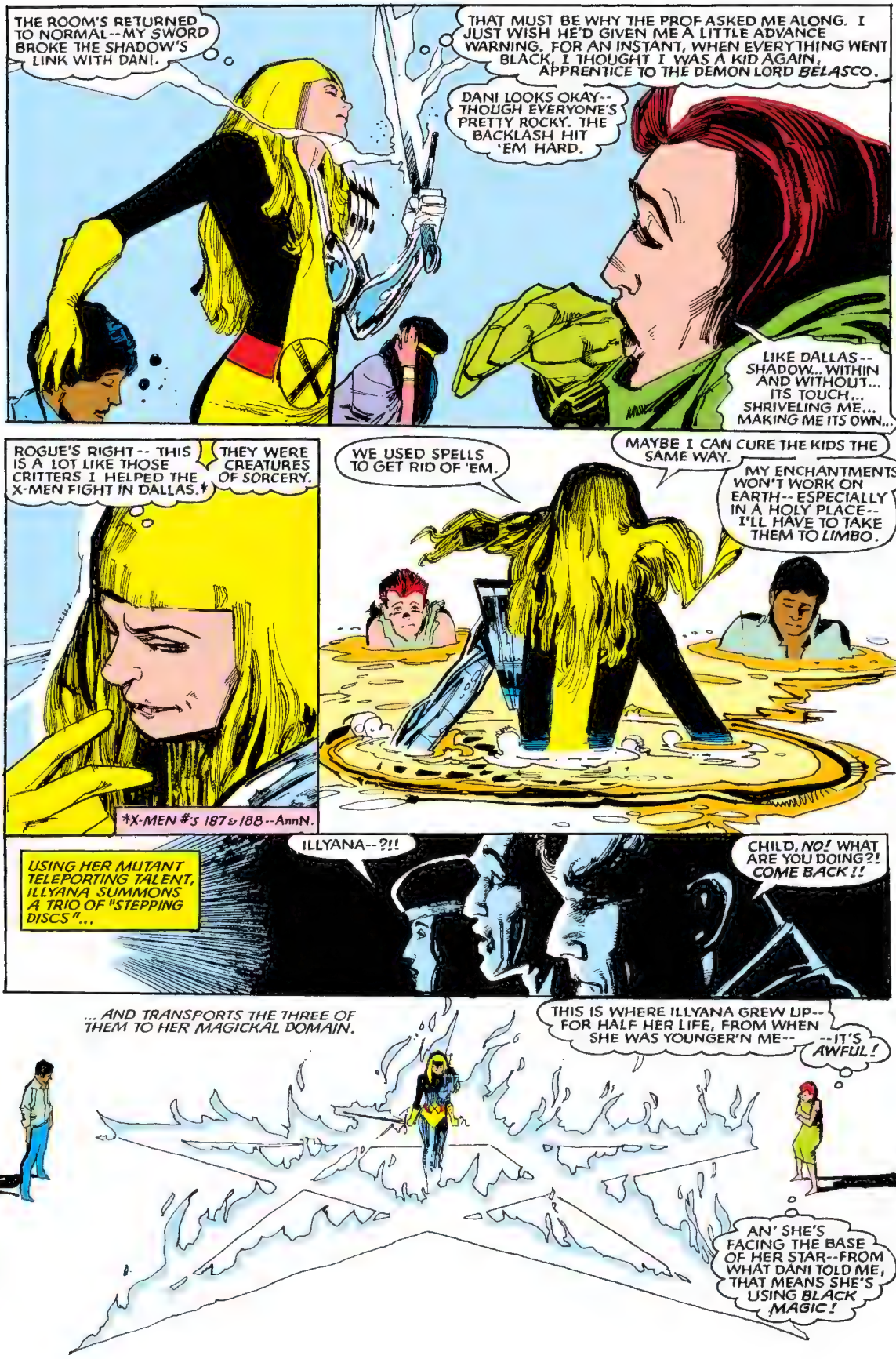

YOU KNOW HOW B-B-BAD I WANT'A SAY YES?! AS CLOAK AN' D-D-DAGGER, WE'RE BOUND TOGETHER.
WITHOUT THAT, WE GOT N-N-NOTHIN'!
TY, THAT ISN'T TRUE.
C'MON, TANDY,--DAGGER'S B-B-BEAUTIFUL, ALL THAT'S BEST IN LIFE ROLLED UP IN WH-WH-ONE PERSON.
IT'S DIFFERENT FOR ME.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- YOU C-C-CAN'T, NOBODY CAN WHO AIN'T B-B-BEEN THERE--
--WHAT IT'S LIKE FEELING D-D-DARKNESS GROW INSIDE YOU LIKE A C-C-CANCER, AN' YOURSELF BECOMING A SLAVE TO ITS AWFUL H-H-HUNGER.
TANDY, THE MORE I USED MY POWER, THE MORE I W-W-WANTED TO, LIKE I'M SOME KIND'A JUNKIE OR VAMPIRE. TOWARDS THE END, IT WAS GETTIN' HARDER AN' H-H-HARDER TO CONTROL!
IT AIN'T FAIR, Y'KNOW?! I MEAN, WHY M-M-ME, WHAT'D I EVER DO TO D-D-DESERVE THIS?!!
WHAT DID THOSE KIDS DO? THEY'RE SO MUCH YOUNGER THAN US, TY--HARDLY MORE THAN BABIES. IF BEING CLOAK WAS SUCH A CURSE FOR YOU, HOW CAN YOU WISH ITON ANYONE ELSE?
BUT IF YOU CAN DO THAT, AND WALK AWAY, THEN YOU'RE RIGHT: YOU HAVE LOST ME. BECAUSE I CAN'T BE THAT CRUEL. IT MAKES US NO BETTER THAN THE SCUM WE FOUGHT.
SOME CHOICE--EITHER I LOSE THE PERSON WHO MEANS MORE TO ME THAN ANYONE...
OR MAYBE MY OWN SOUL.
PETER'S SOUND ASLEEP, PROFESSOR. I MADE HIM AS COMFORTABLE AS I COULD.
THANK YOU, ILLYANA. DON'T WORRY, MY PSI-PROBE OF YOUR BROTHER REVEALS NO LASTING ILL EFFECTS FROM HIS EXPERIENCE.
BY THE WAY, SAM, WHILE I APPRECIATE THE NEED FOR SELF-EXPRESSION, WE ARE A RESPECTABLE SCHOOL, NOT A COLLECTION OF RAGAMUFFINS. THIS REQUIRES THAT CERTAIN STANDARDS BE MAINTAINED. IN FUTURE, PLEASE DRESS ACCORDINGLY.
YESSIR.
LILA
LOVE YOUR SHIRT, SAM--AND YOUR LADY LILA'S MUSIC.
THANKS, ROGUE--sigh!


THIS IS HALLOWED GROUND--THE DEMON SORCERESS PART OF ME HATES IT.
I FEEL LIKE SOMEBODY'S SCRAPING CLAWS ACROSS A BLACKBOARD--IF PETER WEREN'T MY BIG BROTHER, I'D BE LONG GONE FROM HERE.

HOW'S IT GOING, CHARLES?
I'VE PSI-PROBED EVERY FACET OF THEIR MINDS, MICHAEL. YET I KNOW LITTLE MORE THAN WHEN I BEGAN.


RAHNE'S NATURAL LIFE-FORCE HAS BEEN AMPLIFIED TO AN UNIMAGINABLE--PERHAPS ULTIMATE--DEGREE. SHE'S LITERALLY BURSTING WITH ENERGY.
BUT WHATEVER'S AFFECTING ROBERTO IS BEYOND MY ABILITY TO ISOLATE. IT ISN'T A FUNCTION OF HIS OWN PSYCHE--IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING THAT MANIFESTS ITSELF THROUGH HIM, MAKING HIM IN EFFECT A VESSEL FOR AN OUTSIDE FORCE OR ENTITY, BUT THERE'S NO SOLID INDICATION OF THAT. I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO SENSE ANY OTHER PRESENCE.
I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE THIS. IF THE SITUATION WEREN'T SO CRITICAL, IT WOULD REALLY BE QUITE FASCINATING.
MAYBE *MY* PSI-TALENT CAN DO THE TRICK, PROFESSOR--ESPECIALLY SINCE I INTERACT WITH EMOTIONS AS MUCH AS THOUGHTS.
I'VE SEEN AND FELT WHAT THE BOY CAN DO, DANIELLE, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
DO WE GIVE UP, THEN?
I'M WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK, SIR. THEY'VE BOTH DONE AS MUCH FOR ME.
ALL RIGHT...
...BUT JOIN *EN RAPPORT* WITH ME FIRST, SO I CAN MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS AND BE READY TO HELP IF YOU HIT TROUBLE.
AS SOON AS XAVIER'S READY, DANI INTERFACES WITH ROBERTO'S MIND, SEEKING WHATEVER HE FEARS MOST, HOPING TO PROVOKE A REACTION FROM WHATEVER HAS POSSESSED HIM.

SHE GETS HER WISH...
...AS SHADOW EXPLODES FROM HIM...
...SMASHING INTO EVERYONE PRESENT WITH IRRESISTIBLE FORCE, OBLITERATING ANY PSYCHIC DEFENSES AS IF THEY DON'T EXIST, FILLING THEIR HEARTS WITH UTTER DESPAIR, EATING AWAY AT THEIR SOULS.
RAHNE HAS THE POWER TO FIGHT IT...
...BUT SHE'S CAUGHT UNAWARES--DEEP ASLEEP, WHERE HER CHILD-SELF IS MOST VULNERABLE--AND THE SHADOW SURROUNDS HER WITH NIGHTMARES...
...STRIPPING HER OF THE WILL TO RESIST.
ONLY XAVIER SEEMS UNAFFECTED BY THE BRUTAL ONSLAUGHT.
THEN, SUDDENLY...
...A BLINDING, SILVER RADIANCE SLASHES THROUGH THE DARKNESS!
...ILLYANA'S SOULSWORD--THE ESSENCE OF HER MAGICKAL POWERS...
...FOCUSED INTO A WEAPON NO ELDRITCH ENTITY OR SPELL CAN WITHSTAND.


THE ROOM'S RETURNED TO NORMAL--MY SWORD BROKE THE SHADOW'S LINK WITH DANI.
THAT MUST BE WHY THE PROF ASKED ME ALONG. I JUST WISH HE'D GIVEN ME A LITTLE ADVANCE WARNING. FOR AN INSTANT, WHEN EVERYTHING WENT BLACK, I THOUGHT I WAS A KID AGAIN, APPRENTICE TO THE DEMON LORD BELASCO.
DANI LOOKS OKAY--THOUGH EVERYONE'S PRETTY ROCKY. THE BACKLASH HIT 'EM HARD.
LIKE DALLAS--SHADOW... WITHIN AND WITHOUT... ITS TOUCH... SHRIVELING ME... MAKING ME ITS OWN...
ROGUE'S RIGHT-- THIS IS A LOT LIKE THOSE CRITTERS I HELPED THE X-MEN FIGHT IN DALLAS.*
THEY WERE CREATURES OF SORCERY.
*X-MEN #'S 187 & 188--AnnN.
WE USED SPELLS TO GET RID OF 'EM.
MAYBE I CAN CURE THE KIDS THE SAME WAY.
MY ENCHANTMENTS WON'T WORK ON EARTH-- ESPECIALLY IN A HOLY PLACE-- I'LL HAVE TO TAKE THEM TO LIMBO.
USING HER MUTANT TELEPORTING TALENT, ILLYANA SUMMONS A TRIO OF "STEPPING DISCS"...
ILLYANA--?!!
CHILD, NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! COME BACK!!
... AND TRANSPORTS THE THREE OF THEM TO HER MAGICKAL DOMAIN.
THIS IS WHERE ILLYANA GREW UP-- FOR HALF HER LIFE, FROM WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER'N ME--
--IT'S AWFUL!
AN' SHE'S FACING THE BASE OF HER STAR--FROM WHAT DANI TOLD ME, THAT MEANS SHE'S USING BLACK MAGIC!

Bullpen Bulletins

"PERSONALS!"

That's the title of the story which is begun, but not finished, in *The Official Marvel Comics Try-Out Book*, in case you didn't know. That's the book in which I, the Editor in Chief of Mighty Marvel, give everyone out there who wants to be a comic book creator a chance to try out his or her skills under simulated professional working conditions, and, possibly to create professional quality *samples* to submit to us (or any other company) when applying for a job. The *Try-Out* book provides pages to color, to ink, to letter, to script, and to draw. Also, since I deliberately left out the *ending* of the story therein, the *Try-Out* book gives a would-be comics creator a chance to try his hand at *plotting* — devising a way out of the mess in which I leave Spider-Man.

That brilliant maneuver has, apparently, left a lot of people frustrated. I've gotten tons of mail from people wanting to know how the story ends. The honest answer is . . . *I don't know!*

However, I've got yet *another* brilliant maneuver up my sleeve to solve this problem. Here's what we're going to do:

— Run a *Try-Out Contest* and choose the best new penciler, inker, scripter, letterer, colorist, and you guessed it, *plotter!*

— Let our *Try-Out Contest* winners *finish* the story, "Personals!", begun by myself, John Romita, Jr., Al Milgrom, Jim Novak, and Christie Scheele in the *Try-Out Book*, and . . .

— *Publish* the finished story in a Special Edition of *The Amazing Spider-Man*.

How *about* that?

Details of the contest and info on how you can buy *The Official Marvel Comics Try-Out Book* can be found elsewhere in this comic book! You don't *have* to buy a *Try-Out Book* to enter the contest (at $12.95, it's not cheap!), but it does contain lots of useful information which may be helpful. Samples on your own paper will do.

CHANGES!

Jim Owsley has been promoted from Assistant Editor to Editor of the Spider-Man titles, replacing Danny Fingeroth, who, after eight years in the editing biz has bailed out to become a writer (exclusively for Marvel, natch!). Things have improved already with Owsley in command. No, I'm not talking about the *comics*. Danny's is a tough act to follow, though I'm sure Jim will do just fine. I'm talking about the *office*. Gone is Dishevelled Danny's messy workspace. Here, apparently to stay, is Jim's high-tech, high-class *editorial environment*, complete with chrome-and-glass desk, custom lighting, chairs, potted palms and, get this, *a reclining patio lounge chair with matching beach ball.*

Hmm.

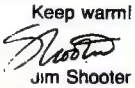
It's certainly *cleaner* looking, but you know, Danny's piles of junk and heaps of papers did have a certain repulsive charm. Sometimes, late at night, I'd swear they moved by themselves . . .

Oh, well. Congratulations to both of you guys!

AN EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT . . . !

. . . will be coming your way next month right here in this column! It concerns a certain short-but-mighty *barbarian*

Keep warm!



Jim Shooter
Editor in Chief

HYPE BOX

SISTERHOOD OF STEEL #1 — Even the bravest man will turn and run from a member of the Sisterhood! They are the best warriors their age has to offer — an elite corps of women mercenaries! What does it take to become a part of this fearsome fighting group? Find out as Boronwé, a girl just entering womanhood, takes her final tests in the arts of warfare. If she passes, the world will be at her feet. If she doesn't . . . The SISTERHOOD OF STEEL — their story is brought to life through the talents of CHRISTY MARX (writer) and MIKE VOSBURG (artist) From EPIC COMICS.

GRAPHIC NOVEL #14 — SWASHBUCKLERS. It's about a rowdy band of pirates that sail the seas between planets! SWASHBUCKLERS! It's about a desperate battle to save Earth from the deadly threat of "The Colonizers!" SWASHBUCKLERS! It's about time you ran down to your bookstore to get your own copy of this masterpiece by BILL MANTLO / BUTCH GUICE (the team that raised the MICRONAUTS to new heights of adventure!)! Soon to be an EPIC COMICS series!

MARVEL TEAM-UP #150 — The destructive villainy of Juggernaut and Black Tom *together* would cause any normal man to head for the hills. Even a super hero would think twice about taking them on! Fortunately, Spider-Man and the X-Men have no such doubts, and the battle is on! LOUISE SIMONSON (writer) and GREG LAROCQUE, MIKE ESPOSITO, and VINNIE COLLETA (artists) really knocked themselves out on this *final-issue extravaganza!* It even sports a BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH cover! But how can this be the end of MARVEL TEAM-UP? Well, all good things must come to an end, as they say, to make room for something *better!* Be here in two months for the first issue of an all-new, all-great SPIDER-MAN title!

POWER MAN / IRON FIST #114 — He helped usher Luke Cage into the Marvel Age, and now he's back as guest penciler for an issue! That's right, it's BILLY GRAHAM penciling JIM OWSLEY's story about Gordy the most harmless-looking little man Cage and the Fist have ever seen! However, Gordy is going to have a profound and dangerous effect on the lives of our Heroes for Hire! And with the growing threat of Control 7, a group of some of the most deadly and nefarious villains in the world, you know that this issue is not to be missed!

CRYSTAR #11 — Secrets are revealed, questions are answered and plot threads are tied up in "Resolution." Will it be a happy ending for Crystalium, or will it be more dangerous than anyone could imagine? You know something's up when Alpha Flight makes the scene! Don't miss any of the excitement in this *final issue* written by JO DUFFY and illustrated by RICARDO VILLAMONTE! Look for the cover by MICHAEL GOLDEN!

CHECK LIST

- ☐ **THE THING #20**
- ☐ **DAREDEVIL #215**
- ☐ **NEW MUTANTS #24**
- ☐ **RED SONJA #6**
- ☐ **MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SECRET WARS (Limited Series) #10** — Fantastic Four. Avengers. X-Men. Hulk. Klaw. Doom. Galactus. Beyonder. *Awesome!!*
- ☐ **ICEMAN (Limited Series) #2**
- ☐ **BUCKAROO BANZAI (Limited Series) #2**
- ☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #261**
- ☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #302**
- ☐ **INDIANA JONES #26**
- ☐ **POWER PACK #7**
- ☐ **MICRONAUTS #5**
- ☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #19**
- ☐ **DR. STRANGE #69**
- ☐ **CRYSTAR #11** — The end of an epic! See Hype Box.
- ☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #304**
- ☐ **AVENGERS #252**
- ☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #167**
- ☐ **X-MEN #190**
- ☐ **MARVEL TALES #172** — Reprinting "The Final Chapter," by STAN LEE and STEVE DITKO, from *Amazing Spider-Man #33.*
- ☐ **ROM #63**
- ☐ **POWER MAN / IRON FIST #114** — Featuring a surprise guest penciler! See Hype Box.
- ☐ **G.I. JOE #32**
- ☐ **KULL THE CONQUEROR #8**
- ☐ **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (Limited Series) #2**
- ☐ **SHEENA OF THE JUNGLE (Limited Series) #2**
- ☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #275**
- ☐ **IRON MAN #191**
- ☐ **PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #99**
- ☐ **DEFENDERS #140**
- ☐ **THOR #352**
- ☐ **STARRIORS (Limited Series) #4**
- ☐ **KITTY PRYDE AND WOLVERINE (Limited Series) #4**
- ☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP #150** — Featuring *Spider-Man* and the *Uncanny X-Men!* Final double-sized issue! See Hype Box.
- ☐ **STAR WARS #92**
- ☐ **DR. WHO #5**

MARVEL MAGAZINES

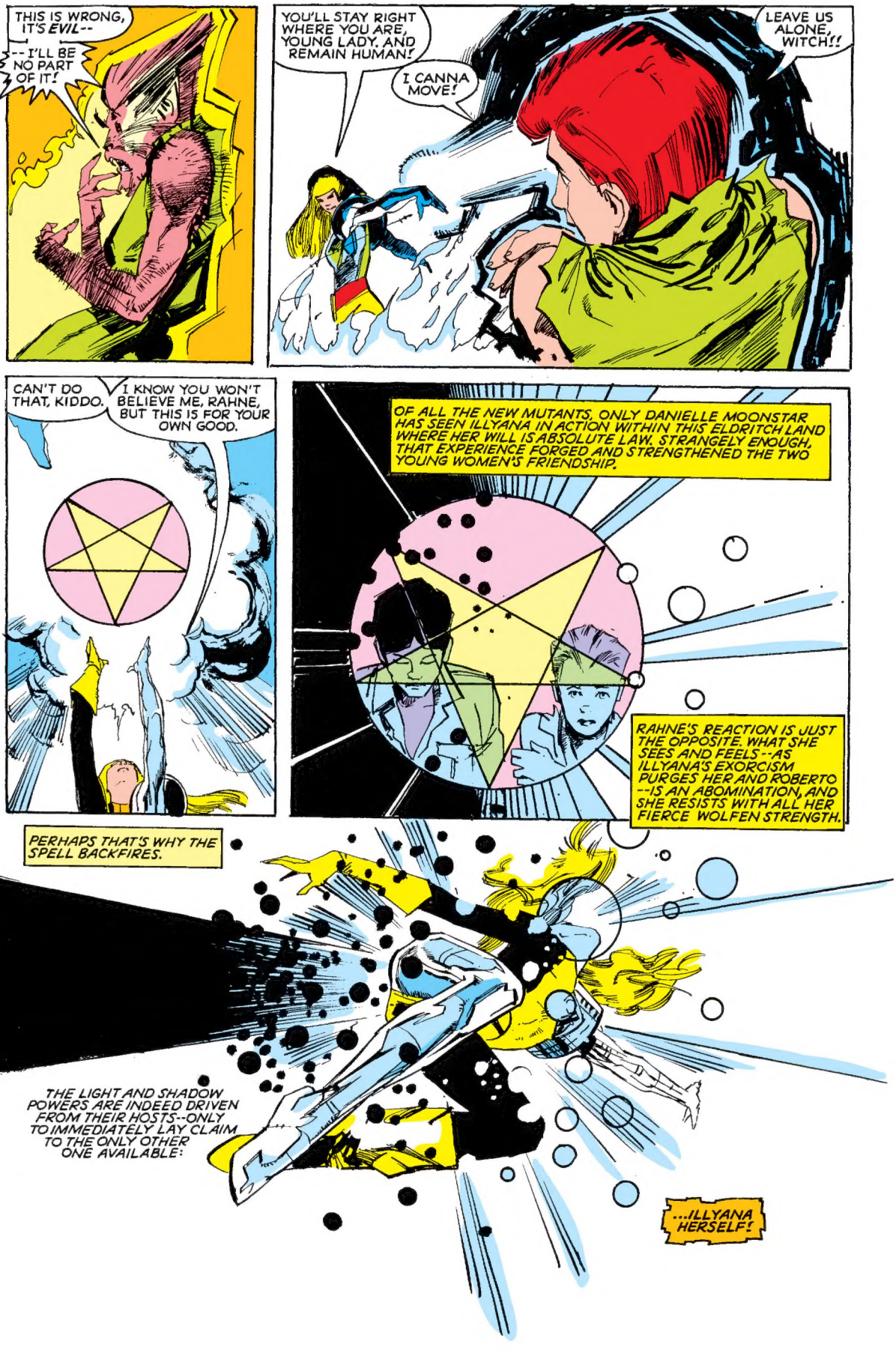
- ☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #108**
- ☐ **MARVEL AGE #23**

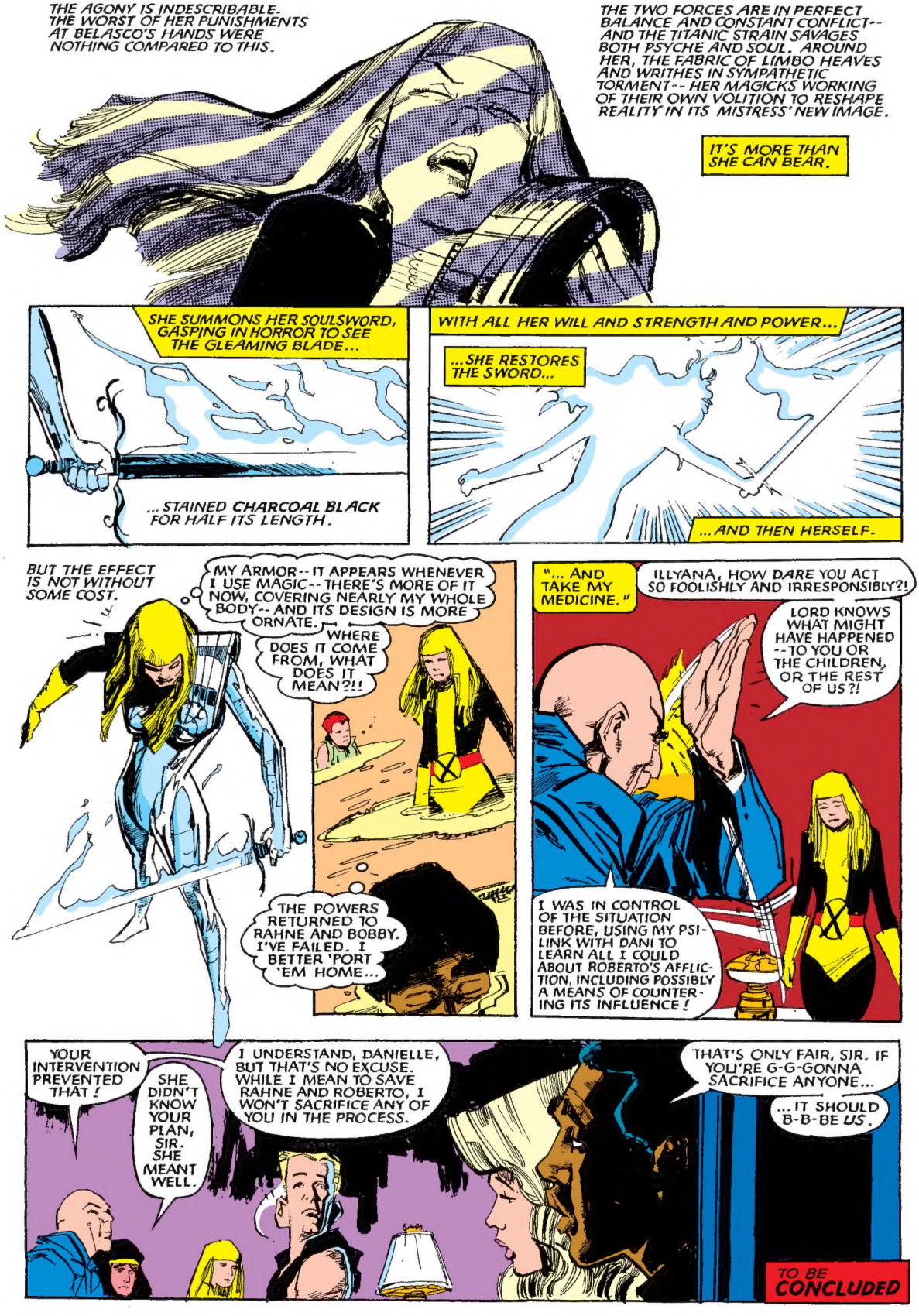
EPIC COMICS

- ☐ **CRASH RYAN (Limited Series) #3**
- ☐ **ALIEN LEGION #5**
- ☐ **SISTERHOOD OF STEEL #1** — In an age ancient and barbaric, they are the killer elite! See Hype Box
- ☐ **DREADSTAR #16**
- ☐ **TIME SPIRITS #2**

GRAPHIC NOVELS

- ☐ **#14: SWASHBUCKLERS** — Not what you might expect! See Hype Box.


THIS IS WRONG, IT'S EVIL--
--I'LL BE NO PART OF IT!
YOU'LL STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE, YOUNG LADY, AND REMAIN HUMAN!
I CANNA MOVE!
LEAVE US ALONE, WITCH!!
CAN'T DO THAT, KIDDO.
I KNOW YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME, RAHNE, BUT THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
OF ALL THE NEW MUTANTS, ONLY DANIELLE MOONSTAR HAS SEEN ILLYANA IN ACTION WITHIN THIS ELDRITCH LAND WHERE HER WILL IS ABSOLUTE LAW. STRANGELY ENOUGH, THAT EXPERIENCE FORGED AND STRENGTHENED THE TWO YOUNG WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP.
RAHNE'S REACTION IS JUST THE OPPOSITE. WHAT SHE SEES AND FEELS--AS ILLYANA'S EXORCISM PURGES HER AND ROBERTO--IS AN ABOMINATION, AND SHE RESISTS WITH ALL HER FIERCE WOLFEN STRENGTH.
PERHAPS THAT'S WHY THE SPELL BACKFIRES.
THE LIGHT AND SHADOW POWERS ARE INDEED DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOSTS--ONLY TO IMMEDIATELY LAY CLAIM TO THE ONLY OTHER ONE AVAILABLE:
...ILLYANA HERSELF!


THE AGONY IS INDESCRIBABLE. THE WORST OF HER PUNISHMENTS AT BELASCO'S HANDS WERE NOTHING COMPARED TO THIS.
THE TWO FORCES ARE IN PERFECT BALANCE AND CONSTANT CONFLICT-- AND THE TITANIC STRAIN SAVAGES BOTH PSYCHE AND SOUL. AROUND HER, THE FABRIC OF LIMBO HEAVES AND WRITHES IN SYMPATHETIC TORMENT-- HER MAGICKS WORKING OF THEIR OWN VOLITION TO RESHAPE REALITY IN ITS MISTRESS' NEW IMAGE.
IT'S MORE THAN SHE CAN BEAR.
SHE SUMMONS HER SOULSWORD, GASPING IN HORROR TO SEE THE GLEAMING BLADE...
...STAINED CHARCOAL BLACK FOR HALF ITS LENGTH.
WITH ALL HER WILL AND STRENGTH AND POWER...
...SHE RESTORES THE SWORD...
...AND THEN HERSELF.
BUT THE EFFECT IS NOT WITHOUT SOME COST.
MY ARMOR-- IT APPEARS WHENEVER I USE MAGIC-- THERE'S MORE OF IT NOW, COVERING NEARLY MY WHOLE BODY-- AND ITS DESIGN IS MORE ORNATE.
WHERE DOES IT COME FROM, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?!!
THE POWERS RETURNED TO RAHNE AND BOBBY. I'VE FAILED. I BETTER 'PORT 'EM HOME...
"... AND TAKE MY MEDICINE."
ILLYANA, HOW DARE YOU ACT SO FOOLISHLY AND IRRESPONSIBLY?!
LORD KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED --TO YOU OR THE CHILDREN, OR THE REST OF US?!
I WAS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION BEFORE, USING MY PSI-LINK WITH DANI TO LEARN ALL I COULD ABOUT ROBERTO'S AFFLICTION, INCLUDING POSSIBLY A MEANS OF COUNTERING ITS INFLUENCE!
YOUR INTERVENTION PREVENTED THAT!
SHE DIDN'T KNOW YOUR PLAN, SIR. SHE MEANT WELL.
I UNDERSTAND, DANIELLE, BUT THAT'S NO EXCUSE. WHILE I MEAN TO SAVE RAHNE AND ROBERTO, I WON'T SACRIFICE ANY OF YOU IN THE PROCESS.
THAT'S ONLY FAIR, SIR. IF YOU'RE G-G-GONNA SACRIFICE ANYONE...
...IT SHOULD B-B-BE US.
TO BE CONCLUDED

REPORT CARD

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

ANN NOCENTI
EDITOR
PETER SANDERSON
ASSISTANT EDITOR

We like to get your letters. But if you don't want your full address published, please tell us.

Dani,

May the mountains' own Great Spirit
Make your life a singing stream;
May a rainbow touch your shoulder
And bring fulfillment of your dream.
Be well, Dani! A friend

John Costello, Jr.
Rapid City, SD 57701

Our thanks as well as Dani's, John, to you — and all the others kind and generous enough to wish her a speedy and complete recovery. As you have no doubt (hopefully) seen from this issue, the kid's getting better all the time!

To: the creators of NEW MUTANTS
Re: #20 — "Badlands"

Oh, ***WOW!*** Masterpiece! Ooooh! Geniuses! Brilliant! Aarrrgh! Talent! Superexcellence! Oooodo! Unsurpassable! Stupendous! Wheeee! Ultrasupreme! Extraplendiferous!

Whew.

I won't say I'm at a loss for words, 'cause I'm not.

I will say, however, that this has got to be among the absolute greatest epics of all comicdom!

Bill, that was one incredible work of art. The demon bear and its pawn demons were soul-chilling. They were the best monsters I've ever seen in comics. Ever. They were *so* sinister and *so* wicked and *so* nightmarish that every square millimeter of them just reeked of evil. I loved it.

Your portrayal of the New Mutants is not as realistically exact as that of your predecessors, but in most cases it perfectly captures their personalities, their moods, their essence. The panel of Illyana at the top of page 15 is my all-time favorite picture of her. I don't know why, but it riveted my attention the first time I saw it.

In fact, I loved almost every panel of Illyana throughout the book. I loved her characterization, her dialogue and everything else about her. She has become my favorite character among the New Mutants. (You see, I, too, am a teenage girl with long blonde hair and although I cannot yet summon a soulsword, I'm working on it.) So thank you, Chris, for having her save the day. She is a spellbinding heroine (pun intended) and a first-rate character. Even though her ordeal in Limbo has been chronicled, she retains an aura of mystery. What is this armor that keeps appearing? What are the extent and spectrum of her powers? Exactly how severed are her ties with Belasco? She is also, it seems, quite an adept leader. Looks like Dani could have some competition. Please, when they're back in more mundane surroundings, don't forget Illyana. She has fantastic potential.

Hmm. Wow. The rest of the story was great, too. The colors . . . oh, the colors. Glynis, you outdid yourself on this one. The colors gave harmony to the aforementioned melody of the inkblack. It was a truly masterful manipulation of the rainbow.

And who'd'a thought the bear to be who it was? I must admit, Chris had me stumped, fair and square. The flow of the plot was smooth and the dialogue was credible. The one thing I hope is that the discovery of this Morlock healer isn't going to mean that everyone gets bashed all the time (more than they already are) and then he comes along and — poof! — everything's sweetness and light. But I give you more credit than that. It doesn't look as if you're in danger of following that path.

I love what you're doing. Keep Chris, Bill, Glynis, Tom and Ann around, and I'll be there every month, same time, same newsstand.

Alison Humphrey
287 Brunswick Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2M6

Sounds good to us, Alison. (By the way, for all you fans of Bill's work, don't forget to catch the upcoming Marvel Comics adaptation of the film version of Frank Herbert's SF classic, DUNE, as superbly scripted by Ralph Macchio and on sale this Christmas.)

Dear Marvel Chronologists,

After reading NM #20, I thought I'd comment on something that disturbed me. To my mind, you left a very big loose end in regard to Dani's parents and the demon bear. What caused their transformation in the first place? What "evil" is behind all this and does it have to do with Dani's parents? Was their transformation a product of being in the wrong place at the wrong time? Or was it by design?

Finally, how about a poster of the New Mutants by Bill Sienkiewicz? I know your readers would enjoy it as would I! What say?

Ricardo Rodrigues
1148 N. Stickman Ave.
La Puente, California 91748

The "evil" responsible for the ensorcellment of Dani's folks knew precisely what it was doing, Ricardo, both in attacking them and the methods it used. Indeed, it recently made its first "appearance" in the pages of X-MEN #188 — much to the regret of the aged Cheyenne shaman, Naze. Something very significant, and *very* nasty, is in the works — wth ramifications that'll affect both New Mutants and X-Men. Stay tuned! As for a Sienkiewicz New Mutants poster, have we got a surprise for you! Marvel Press has just released one! Bill calls it his "primal scream." We think it's fantastic — Jim Shooter even thought it belonged in the Museum of Modern Art — so let us know your reactions, readers, okay? We're interested!

Dear Madam:

To paraphrase Kitty Pryde: "What do you do when people you respect and really care for suddenly change so completely that they're like total strangers?"

The last page of X-MEN #182 reads: "Don't call 'em 'X-BABIES' anymore! Find out what's new with the New Mutants . . ." as an introduction to Bill Sienkiewicz' work as artist for the Professor's junior class. Unfortunately for him, "X-Babies" is exactly what the New Mutants are and should always be.

There are plenty of comics about adults, showing what grown men and women who possess spectacular abilities might be like. A fine example is Chris Claremont's other charge, NM's big brother, THE X-MEN. As a reader of both, I can appreciate the differences between them. The X-Men save the world, get caught up in Secret Wars, or are kidnapped by aliens and almost lose their humanity. The New Mutants do homework as well as heroics, and try to cope with their own growing up as well as their many amazing powers. Their "battles" are usually on a smaller scale, both because they aren't supposed to be playing hero yet and because really titanic-scale battles don't mix well with underaged characters on a regular basis. I like the New Mutants as those people in #8 who mix tag and power-practice.

Bill Sienkiewicz seems to be changing that. In three issues he's created a world of inky shadows and hesitant, cheerless faces that clashes terribly with the notion of a team of very special children. If NEW MUTANTS is not X-MEN, then it most emphatically is not MOON KNIGHT! Bill may be a very good artist, but his work simply does not belong in this magazine; the style is completely inappropriate for anything so upbeat.

I am not alone in these sentiments; everyone I know agrees that the magazine is going decidedly downhill. Most mention "not buying it anymore," but I am too much the optimist to take such measures yet. Bring back Mr. Mandrake; Bill Sienkiewicz just doesn't fit in here.

Anonymous

Cheerless faces?!? Did you see the girls at the slumber party? Or read Rahne's fairy tale? And what could be more teenage than popcorn, pillow fights and rock 'n roll?!? But a primary part of this book will *always* be heartache and change — the flip side to growing up. Especially for these kids, who besides getting into their share of normal teenage trouble, will have the problems that come with having superpowers. Expect more shadows, but remember that shadow does not preclude light — it just makes both more intense. Stay with us, "anonymous," you won't be sorry!

NEXT ISSUE: Can Cloak and Dagger's powers be restored to them? Do they even want those powers back? Would *you?!* And what will happen to Rahne and Roberto in the process? Find out in "The Only Thing to Fear," on sale in 30 days!

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Syl3nt Bob and PhD

He's a gonna be OKAY!

I think...